

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

**The Jesuit Educational
Center for Human Development**



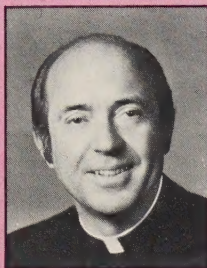
Life After Youth

Becoming Holy and Whole

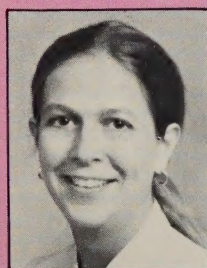
Helping the Paranoid Person

The Crisis of Limits

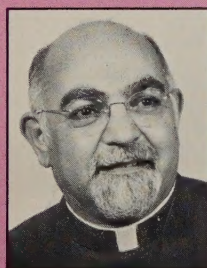
Parable on Suffering



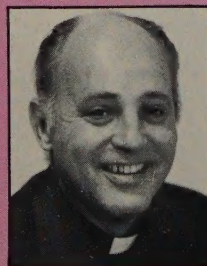
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF James J. Gill, S.J., M.D., is a priest, physician, and psychiatrist. While working at the Harvard University Health Services during the past 15 years, Father Gill has served as psychiatric consultant to superiors of many religious congregations, formation personnel, and spiritual renewal centers throughout the world. During recent years, he has taught at the University of San Francisco, Loyola University (Illinois), St. John's University (Minnesota), the U.S. Air Force Chaplains School (Alabama), and the Graduate Theological Union (California). A member of the California Province of the Society of Jesus, Father Gill grew up in San Francisco and was ordained to the priesthood there in 1957. He has published more than 50 papers on topics related to religion, human development, community life, and psychiatry.



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HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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Human Development

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Manuscripts should be submitted in duplicate to the senior editor, Linda Amadeo, P.O. Box 218, Somerville, MA 02143. Copy should be typewritten double spaced on 8½ × 11 inch white paper with generous margins on each page. Manuscripts are received with the understanding that they have not been previously published and are not currently under consideration elsewhere. Feature articles should be limited to 5,000 words with no more than 10 listings in the bibliography; filler items of between 500 and 1,000 words will be considered. All accepted material is subject to editing.

Authors are responsible for the completeness and accuracy of proper names in both text and bibliography. Acknowledgments must be given when substantial material is quoted from other publications. Provide names of author(s), title of article, title of journal or book, volume number, page(s), month and year, and publisher's permission to use material.

Illustrations, if any, should be submitted as high-quality, glossy, unmounted black-and-white photographic prints. Do not send original artwork.

Letters are welcome and will be published as space permits and at the discretion of the editors. Such communications should not exceed 600 words and are subject to editing.

All submissions should be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed return envelope.

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EDITORIAL

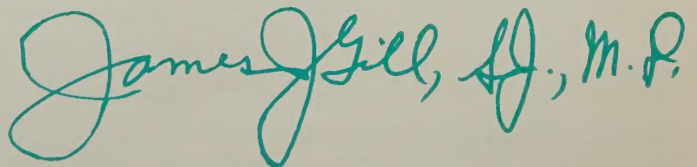
THE NEED WE HAVE OF EASTER

It hardly seems possible that spring has already arrived, bringing the fragrance of blossoms, the melodies of birds, and the paschal celebration. Only a few weeks ago, it seems, we were wrapping gifts, mailing cards, and decorating trees to play our part in the 1981 observance of Christmas. We were wishing each other peace and joy—inconsciously, at a time when Poland had just been wrangled by martial law, Israel had belligerently annexed the Golan Heights, Russian soldiers were fighting in Afghanistan, the Iraq-Iran war was escalating, Cuba was fomenting bloody revolutions in Central America, Libya was widely exporting terrorism, and Christians were maiming one another in Northern Ireland. A planet that *U.S. News and World Report* described in its year-end issue as "teething with bitter conflict and explosive rivalries."

Peace on earth felt so far from reality this past winter while we were singing "Silent Night" and gratefully recalling the arrival in our midst of the Prince of Peace. The sentiment expressed by shimmering tinsel and romantic sleigh bells was hard to harmonize with the fear, hatred, and bloodshed that in December served as the backdrop for the stockings hung by the fireplace and the packages under the tree that excited children unwrapped as the evidence of love—at least in the homes of the affluent. And as usual we paid more attention to the gifts brought by the Magi and the songs sung by angels than we did to the bloodshed of the Holy innocents. Who wants to spoil the sweet sentiment of the season of Jesus' birth?

But here we are, in springtime, now celebrating his resurrection with the same struggling, suffering world surrounding us. Only now we don't have to turn away from it to maintain in our hearts the true spirit of the season. We find a reminder in the events of Good Friday that when a resurrection is being prepared for, there is a time for encountering suffering along the way. It takes faith to endure with realism and hopefulness the crosses we as individuals, families, communities, and nations must bear in times like these. To maintain this requisite faith and hope, we need each other's example and encouragement.

May this Easter season bring all of us a deepening sense of the faith and hope that will culminate ultimately in a share of the Resurrection. And may this season, which lacks some of the sentimental appeal of Christmas, strengthen our awareness that success in life is meant to be measured, at least by Christians, more in terms of spirit and conviction than by tender and cozy feelings. Our Easter joy will be only as complete as the spiritual transformation of our Friday crosses.



James J. Gill, S.J., M.D.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

For Longer Life

Please accept my thanks for the Fall 1981 issue of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT. You have outdone yourselves. I can honestly say it has been the talk of the town in my circles. I am convinced that the article on Type A behavior has helped me personally and hopefully will add a few years to my life.

Rev. Alan F. Jurkus
Vocations Director
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

For More Midlife

Let me congratulate you for the two articles on midlife in your Fall 1981 issue, which came as an answer to our need for some readings on this topic at the time our copy arrived. More articles on this subject would surely be helpful to many religious who find themselves in this age bracket.

Lovey A. Reyes, icm
St. Croix, Virgin Islands

Supreme Compliment

I am a student of theology and also a Catholic youth. I came across your magazine, HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, and found it very useful for academic and spiritual purposes. I therefore wish to know how possible it is to receive it regularly even if it means some payment.

Celestine O.K. Anyanwu
Mbaiese-ow, Nigeria

Nonsexist Language Decision

It was with interest and a sense of relief that I read your editorial (Fall 1981) on sexist language. I have been a subscriber and reader since the beginning of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT and disagreed with your original decision primarily because I felt that a journal such as yours should err on the side of being too sensitive. It is also my conviction that our language conveys much more than we realize at times. The hidden, and often not hidden, sexism in the

church is a constant basis for questioning its credibility. I congratulate you on being willing to take this step.

Sr. Catherine Mary Harmer, Ph.D.
Sector Superior, Medical Mission Sisters
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

You asked for input on "Our Sexist Language Problem." I want to affirm your decision and say I support the rationale of Marian Cowan, C.S.J., 100%! Am appreciating the magazine.

Carol McMullen, S.N.J.M.
Spokane, Washington

Improving an excellent publication is quite a feat. I believe you will accomplish this through your decision to eliminate sexist language in the future!

Sr. Marie Werdmann
Oldenburg, Indiana

I'm delighted with your decision to eliminate sexist language. Enclosed is a check for my subscription, which, as indicated in an earlier letter, I withheld as a matter of conscience and Gospel justice, pending a change in your language policy. Thank you for listening to the disappointment, pain, and hurt of so many women and for choosing to allow the power of the word in HUMAN DEVELOPMENT to reflect and shape a new creation of equality and mutuality for all of humankind.

Mary C. Finn, S.S.J.
Uncasville, Connecticut

I'm sick of this damn nonsense about women being slighted. The poverty of the English language is at fault, not the people. We simply have no equivalent of "homo," as you well know. To keep leaping over he/she endlessly is ridiculous. We'll soon have to be saying *young* men and *young* women, *old* men and *old* women, ad nauseam! You'll never please them all, so forget it.

Msgr. Oliver D. Keefer
Coraopolis, Pennsylvania

Cooperation Not Easy

As to sexist language, I guess I applaud your decision as expressed in the recent editorial. But the person who thinks he or she will have a simple enough experience of changeover should look at the quotation from St. Matthew that I use in "The Heart's Fling" (this issue). There are stylistic awkwardnesses much worse than overuse of *he*, I expect; *he/she*, for instance, is a barbarism and the frequent use of *one* is terribly stiff. You will see (on page 44) how I have cudgled my brain on this matter and what revisions, via liquid correction fluid, I made in consequence of your directives.

James Torrens, S.J.
Santa Clara, California

A New Approach

The Joint Program in Spiritual Direction sponsored by Weston School of Theology and the Center for

Religious Development has been mentioned in previous issues of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT (Spring and Winter 1980; Spring 1981). Some of your readers might like to know that Weston and the Center have decided to initiate a new and more flexible association and to terminate the joint program.

The Associates' Program will continue to bring experienced pastoral workers to the staff of the center for a year and to assist them through the practice of spiritual direction, supervision, and extensive reflection to develop their abilities as directors. It will no longer, however (at least for the present time), be part of a degree program. One result of this change will be a new flexibility in admissions requirements for the Associates' Program. Applicants will continue to need a sound theological background but will no longer have to meet the academic requirements established for graduate programs in theology.

William J. Connolly, S.J.
Cambridge, Massachusetts

New Books
of Interest to Readers of
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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THE RETREAT HANDBOOK

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola—Identifying and clarifying the dynamics inherent in the exercises.

A practical handbook for all persons giving and making the directed retreat—

Authors, Fr. John Carroll Futrell, S.J. and Sister Marian Cowan, C.S.J.

Ministry Training Services 240 pages

INSIDE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Written specifically for men and women religious to help them understand the dynamics involved and to improve the quality of their lives while living in local community. The authors focus directly on the problem of how to make community groups function more smoothly. "Only the conviction that we are called by God makes community living reasonable, a value in our lives and a source of growth for us."

Though the emphasis of this book is on dynamics as they affect community living, the knowledge is equally applicable to the experiences encountered among staffs and in parish life.

Authors, Sister Rosine Hammett, C.S.C. and Brother Loughlan Sofield, S.T.

Volume I of **HUMAN DEVELOPMENT** containing all the feature articles which appeared in the Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter 1980 issues.

Editor, James J. Gill, S.J., M.D.

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THE CRISIS OF LIMITS: MIDLIFE BEGINNINGS

JAMES R. ZULLO, F.S.C., Ph.D.

One of the first awarenesses I had that I might be entering the midlife crisis of limits occurred quite surprisingly one day when a husky, tall high school senior approached me in the school corridor and announced with the bubbling enthusiasm characteristic of youthful discovery, "Brother, did you know that you went to grade school with my mother?" After I registered my shock at his impertinence, I closed my mouth and collected what was left of my composure. Just to be sure there was no mistake, I inquired as to his mother's maiden name. When he revealed it, I could only admit that I did in fact go to grade school with his mother. What I didn't tell him is that she was a year younger than me. Later in the day as I was driving home on a slow-moving expressway, I had the startling realization that I had grown old enough to be this young man's father.

The experience brought me back in memory to my own adolescent years and to what a roller-coaster time of life that was for me. It made me aware of the number of years that had been marked off on my lifeline since adolescence and highlighted the growing distance I sensed between myself and the young in general. When I was 21 my students were 16; now that I was 41, my students were still 16 and the margin between us had grown a whole generation, from 5 to 25 years.

A changing time perspective coupled with a re-framing of one's self-concept are often factors that occasion the crisis of limits. I will discuss this crisis as the beginning experience of midlife. The topic will be approached from three sides: (1) definition and description of the concept, (2) major themes, and (3) resolutions.

THE CRISIS OF LIMITS

What does the term crisis of limits mean? It will be helpful to begin with the word crisis itself. In our language crisis has many meanings. Commonly it connotes potential disaster (the stock market crisis), a life-or-death situation (the crisis time in a surgical procedure or serious illness), or political instability or unrest (the Middle East crisis). However, there is also a developmental meaning: crisis as a turning point, a crucial time in human development, a time of decision making. I prefer Erik Erikson's definition because it highlights the paradoxical nature of crisis, namely its dangers as well as its opportunities. He defines crises as "cru-

Brother Zullo is director of the Christian Brothers Counseling Center in Westchester, Illinois, and adjunct professor in the Institute of Pastoral Studies at Loyola University of Chicago.

cial periods of increased vulnerability and heightened potential."

Limits refer to the final and furthest boundaries, the borders and confines within which we experience human existence. "The sky's the limit" we say when we do not want to put any boundaries around our options. Managerial and motivational professionals tell us there's no limit to what we can do or be, and we are invited to explore the limitless possibilities that are open to us. Yet the fact remains that there are certain parameters and limitations that impress us as we journey through the life cycle. In young adulthood, we become impressed by the limits of our intelligence, talent, personality, and physical agility. Limits of time and energy are generally learned during midlife.

The crisis of limits is the experience in adult development that marks the transition into midlife. Unlike the beginnings of adolescence, which are primarily biological in nature, the onset of this crisis is associated with experiences, circumstances, and events that effect a more interior revolution. During young adulthood, a woman religious consolidates an identity around certain decisions and commitments. For better or worse, these commitments give her life direction and meaning and shape her self-definition and values. A priest in midlife discovers during his crisis of limits that certain trusted definitions of himself and long-held interpretations of reality are increasingly threatened by life experiences and are beginning to collapse. "I didn't expect it to turn out this way" reveals a sense of disappointment that earlier life dreams and aspirations have not materialized or have been lost. Previously workable constructions of meaning become unglued, and there is the growing discovery that the "old stuff" doesn't work anymore.

NEW POSSIBILITIES SEEN

The crisis of limits, a turning point in adult life, highlights the paradox of human life. On one hand, I am increasingly aware of the limitations I observe and experience in myself. On the other hand, I am coming to realize an increasing sense of autonomy. Knowing my limits frees me from being something that I am not. Being aware of my boundaries allows me to experiment and test new possibilities and options. I learn to maximize the use of my time; because I have less time I work more selectively and intelligently. I may have less energy, but I pace myself more strategically and learn how to conserve my resources. Having shed the adolescent tendency to seek romantic solutions that promise escape from conflicts or easy answers to my problems, I develop better judgment and become better at reality testing. I also am developing a greater tolerance for ambivalence and ambiguity; I learn to appreciate the complexity of human maturity.

The various experiences that trigger the crisis of limits may fall into categories that have been de-

scribed as developmental or traumatic crises. The primary characteristic of the developmental crisis is that it is normal and expected and fits within the framework of a particular stage in the life cycle. For example, a developmental crisis may occur around issues of vocation in young adulthood, intimacy in midlife, or retirement in the later years.

In midlife there is often a growing sense of reflection, a tendency to ask more questions about myself and my world. Why am I restless in my ministry? Why do I worry more and more about my aging parents? Why do I get depressed at times? Why am I so confused about my sexuality? Why do I feel so lonely on occasion? Why can't I pray? Why do I seem to know more people who are sick or dying? Why does God seem so silent? From a developmental perspective, these questions indicate the beginnings of the crisis of limits and, as such, should be considered on schedule, rather than signs of impending vocational loss or emotional breakdown.

Moving into the crisis of limits may be the result of trauma. This type of crisis catches me by surprise; it is unpredictable, unexpected, untimely. A 40-year-old priest suffers a stroke. At age 38 a woman religious discovers she has breast cancer. A middle-aged brother undergoes coronary bypass surgery. The traumatic crisis upsets my previously stable life patterns and shatters my well-established self-concept. Through confrontation with an extreme situation that I am thrust into by a traumatic crisis, I am made painfully aware of my vulnerability and the contingencies that circumscribe my life. This type of crisis teaches me clearly that I do not possess total control over my life.

INVITATION TO GROW DOWN

Whether I enter the crisis of limits according to a developmental schedule or I am shocked into it by some unscheduled traumatic event, it is important for me to look at this whole experience precisely for what it is, namely an existential growth crisis, a period of increased vulnerability and heightened potential, more normative than exceptional, and more a matter of change and adaptation than loss or decline.

Although the crisis of limits is an involuntary process, I can decide how I am going to interpret its meaning and respond to its invitations and challenges. I can accept its reality or I can deny it and take a direction different from what my experience is telling me. If I choose to undergo the crisis of limits and ride it out, I will need time and the patient assistance of trusted others to learn its meaning for me. What is this experience saying to me? What does it mean? Why is this happening to me now? Where is this taking me? Through these questions I learn that the lure of the crisis of limits is a pull to come home to myself. It is an invitation

**"There will be
no hope for
the future when
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unreceived
or misunderstood"**

to "grow down" into life, a time to discover and make friends with the person I truly am. The crisis of limits is essentially a reorientation to the truth about myself and my world.

MAJOR THEMES OF THE CRISIS OF LIMITS

The beginnings of the crisis of limits are often confusing and embarrassing. They are situated in the particular midlife context of a contemporary priest or religious and are manifest in one or more of the following ways: (1) unfinished business of the past, (2) body changes, (3) affectivity, (4) death awareness, (5) faith, (6) ministry, and (7) issues of sexuality and intimacy.

Crisis of Unfinished Business. Gerald O'Collins, in his book *The Second Journey*, says a characteristic trait of the midlife journey is that it is essentially a "voyage of self-exploration." I may seek more time to be alone. Solitude now has greater value for me as I find myself wrestling with the meaning and direction of my life. Erikson used the term moratorium to indicate a time-out period, a breathing space in human development. The moratorium in midlife is a pivotal time for reassessment, reevaluation, and redirection. It is a time to take stock of my life and to engage in the painful process of reconciling the unfinished business of the past.

Because the crisis of limits disrupts my stable set of self-definitions, it makes me vulnerable to those unresolved issues of the past that still exercise significant control over my life. Feelings buried for years now emerge from the depths of my unconscious and become attached once again to powerful images and memories from the past. Henri

Nouwen, in his insightful book *Reaching Out*, emphasizes the need to talk out these issues: "There will be no hope for the future when the past remains unconfessed, unreceived or misunderstood."

Often it is precisely the unconfessed past that erupts into my present consciousness and wields its relentless power. The moratorium in midlife offers me the chance to disclose those painful memories, have them accepted by a wise and trusted friend or counselor, and then begin to understand anew their meaning. Although the historical past does not change, the interpretations attached to past events and experiences may change. As a result of constructing new meanings around my self-concept, it is possible to change or modify the meaning of my personal history. I discover a new relationship with an event or experience, seeing it in a different context because of new perceptions I have gained.

For example, I will not be able to change the fact that I was an adopted child. I may have known it since I was five or six years old. But now, at 45, I still find myself having unresolved feelings about myself as an adopted person. I am resentful toward my real parents. Somehow I feel cheated by life and by God. I may need to express my anger at God, at my real parents, at myself to achieve greater peace of mind. The fact that I was adopted does not change, but my relationship to that fact can change. I become a better friend to myself and accept my identity as an adopted person, rather than fighting that definition of who I am and attempting to disown it.

In a fresh approach to the topic Joseph Schmidt, in *Praying Our Experiences*, underscores the invitational nature of these visitors from the past. "When we experience a reoccurring memory and the intensity of the related pain, that experience is asking to be brought into reconciliation." However, I know from previous experience that these attempts at reconciliation with the past do not always produce clarity or even a sense of being done with it. It is important that I do not write a revisionist history of my past in which I always emerge as a "good guy," but rather that I acknowledge the disparity and discrepancies that are part of my self-concept. I discover that exclusionary self-definitions have shaved off those unbecoming features of who I really am and have helped me to project an image of myself that is characterized by certitude and security, wholeness and innocence.

Midlife also calls me to integrate the uncertain and insecure, to admit the brokenness I have experienced in life, and to own my unique patterns of sinfulness. One truth I learn about myself in midlife is that I am not innocent. In their thought-provoking book, *Christian Life Patterns*, Evelyn and James Whitehead offer a seasoned perspective on this issue: "Unresolved conflicts and unhealed parts of our past return to disrupt our lives in the present. Maturity does not imply the absence of such conflicts and inconsistencies but the ability to

DEVELOPMENTAL CRISES

Normal and expected, involving increased vulnerability and heightened potential

- **VOCATION**

(in early adulthood)

- **INTIMACY**

(in early or middle adulthood)

- **RETIREMENT**

(in late adulthood)

TRAUMATIC CRISES

Surprising, unpredictable, untimely, upsetting stable life patterns and shattering established self-concept

- **STROKE**

- **CANCER**

- **CORONARY BYPASS SURGERY**

**CRISIS
OF
LIMITS**

accept this mosaic which is myself. Acceptance does not effect the transformation of the immaturities into health and wholeness; rather it reconciles me to the paradox of human maturity."

Crisis of Body Changes. Very often a midlife religious or priest experiences the onset of the crisis of limits in the arena of bodily changes. Not only am I increasingly aware of the shifting of the body's weight and a growing loss of muscular firmness and flexibility, but I am also continually impressed with a noticeable general decline in energy level and physical powers. I may find myself having more headaches and backaches, as well as occasional bouts of dizziness or insomnia. Perhaps my

vision and hearing are losing some of their acuity. I observe myself experiencing the alternation of chilly sensations with sweating spells, the proverbial hot flashes. As a result of lowering body metabolism I tend to overeat and underexercise, which only serves to exacerbate my fatigue and keep me overweight.

I may observe marked changes in sexual drive, either a decrease or an increase. A decreasing sexual drive may offend my confident self-image as a woman or man, or it may lead me to a generalized state of flattened affect. An increase in sexual drive, often accompanied by heightened sexual fantasies, may intensify my already well developed sense of

confusion and embarrassment. Although none of these changes may be indicative of serious physical illness, persistent symptoms should always be checked by a physician.

It is obvious that the crisis of limits could possibly be introduced by traumatic bodily experiences, such as personal injuries sustained in a serious car accident, stroke, radical mastectomy, open heart surgery, or cancer. These unexpected and untimely occurrences dislodge the previously stable image I have of myself as a healthy, strong person. Through these events I am invited to realize the truth about myself, namely that my body is vulnerable and life itself is fragile.

Someone once said, "The body never lies." During midlife the many new feelings and changes we experience are revealed through our bodies. At times, I may lie to myself by employing unhealthy defense mechanisms, such as repression, denial, or rationalization. I may discover that my colitis is feeding off repressed anger and guilt. Denial could be behind my failure to pace myself more prudently or my inability to say no. I rationalize away my overindulgence in food and drink and my lack of physical exercise.

The challenge in midlife, then, is to become better friends with our bodies, to learn more about their many complicated patterns and unique features. We are invited to take better care of our bodies by means of a more sensible diet, appropriate physical exercise, and a serious commitment to an attitude of wellness by channelling more time, money, and energy into staying well instead of getting sick.

Crisis of Affectivity. Closely related to the physical changes that herald the crisis of limits are the various psychological and emotional signals. Since the most common psychological reaction to the crisis of limits is depression, it will be useful to focus on this bewildering emotion. Depression may be caused by our bodies or it may be the result of our emotional lives. When depression stems from the body, a physical problem is usually at the root. It may be a hormonal disturbance in the endocrine functioning or a condition related to low blood sugar such as hypoglycemia. In these cases depression is the symptom, but the underlying cause is organic. It might be more accurate to say that the body is depressed. This cause and effect relationship is tricky, however, since when I am depressed I will more often than not tend to relate the cause of my depression to something amiss in my emotional life. Although it may not be any less distressing, I may be heartened to learn that the root of my depression is something biological or biochemical, something over which I have little or no control.

Depression becomes more problematic when it is related to the deeper realities that are triggered by the crisis of limits. I may find myself becoming depressed when I realize that certain aspects of my earlier dream as a priest or religious have been lost

or ignored. Depression might settle over me when I begin to face the unfinished business of the past or start to uncover parts of my personality that I have found difficult to own and talk about. It may be that a growing awareness of my vulnerability causes me to slide into depression. When tears accompany my depression it is often a sign that I am trying to let go of my perfectionistic tendencies, my exclusionary self, or my need to be always in control. It is important to realize that often a deepening of my spiritual life occurs through an initial experience of depression.

Other emotional signals that the crisis of limits may be operative include distractibility and the related inability to focus time and energy; mounting irritability and uncharacteristic temper flareups and angry outbursts; withdrawal or antisocial behavior; frantic overwork and a frenzy of activity; a tendency toward increasing dependence on alcohol and other stimulants or sedatives; a free-floating anxiety accompanied by episodic experiences of identity diffusion (feeling rootless or directionless); and inordinate or irrational fears about the future, particularly of death, either my own or that of someone dear and close to me.

There is no question that these affective states reduce self-confidence and enhance self-doubt. Since my judgment may be blurred and my perceptions of reality distorted, it is important for me to realize that I do not have to go through this experience alone. I can count on my friends to respond to my locked-in state and invite me to talk about these feelings and behaviors. Often, I need others to acknowledge that this experience is indeed happening to me before I can begin to accept it myself. I need a perspective that helps me to see these psychological reactions and behavioral patterns for what they are, namely new data about the changing me, not the bad me or the disturbed me or the sick me, but the changing me. If I can accept what is happening to me as more normative than exceptional, I will be more inclined to interpret these signs as growing pains rather than indicators of deterioration or pathology.

Crisis of Death Awareness. One truth about myself that emerges during the midlife crisis of limits is the reality and inevitability of my own eventual death. According to Eliot Jaques in his brilliant essay, "Death and the Mid-life Crisis," awareness of death constitutes "the central and crucial feature of mid-life." Although this perception may strike me forcibly in the midst of a serious physical illness or a near fatal experience, in midlife it is often revealed through the actual losses I encounter of people close to me, like my parents, siblings, close friends, and colleagues. I become keenly aware of the growing number of people I knew my own age and younger who have died of heart attacks, cancer, auto accidents, or other premature causes. Death dislodges my feelings of security and takes me back to a time in my life cycle when similar

How I relate to that Mystery of Life will change as I move from one life stage to another

thoughts and fears may have been present. Jaques explains it this way: "Just as in infancy . . . so in mid-life the establishment of a satisfactory adjustment to the conscious contemplation of one's own death depends upon the same process, for otherwise death itself is equated with depression, chaos, confusion and persecution as it was in infancy."

Death awareness is closely related to the midlife realization of human "caughtness" in time. On one hand, there is still so much of the past that remains unfinished, so many unfulfilled plans and aspirations; on the other hand, the movement into the future continues to accelerate mercilessly. In adolescence I had little sense of limits; now I realize that my future is bounded by time and that much of it is already committed.

The passage of time, how much I have left, and how I want to use that remaining time become the focus of much introspection during midlife. Even though I know that I have less time to live than I have already lived, I am also aware that I bring to my future many rich personal experiences and well-developed resources of my personality. I am deeply grateful for my unique life history, which has been graced by people who have affirmed, accepted, and loved me in many different ways. The urgency to use my remaining time well gives way to an increasing desire to live my life generously and generatively so that I invest more in living life as fully as I can than in preoccupation with the prospect of my own death. In John Updike's recent novel, *Rabbit Is Rich*, Rabbit says to his son: "I haven't done everything right in my life . . . but I haven't committed the greatest sin. I haven't laid down and died."

Crisis of Faith. For persons in the priesthood or

religious life, the crisis of limits often emerges in the form of a collapse of faith formulations. Expected to be experts and models in faith development, spirituality, and religious matters, ministers suffer an occupational embarrassment and fear when their own perspective on faith begins to shift, and they are without a clear and stable sense of themselves as "religious" persons. Images of God and styles of prayer that served in the past to sustain and nurture are changing, and it is unclear why they are breaking down now. More and more I find myself challenging long-held religious beliefs and practices, and I find nothing to put in their place. Prayer is more difficult because it feels empty and senseless. The liturgy no longer carries the same meaning for me; I am bored and restless. My God seems very far away.

The faith crisis in midlife is not so much a question of losing faith as of reframing and repatterning it. Since faith formulations are basically human attempts to construct meanings in relation to God, I can expect, says theologian John Shea, that they will inevitably be broken by life itself, because there is no one meaning that can exhaust the Mystery. How I relate to that Mystery of Life will change as I move from one life stage to another. My image of God when I am a child or adolescent will necessarily be different from the way I view God as an adult. Previously constructed meanings will be cracked by the paradox and contradiction of human life. The challenge, then, is to undergo this experience, to ride it out, to trust ultimately that it is worthwhile and necessary for me to walk through the bewildering present into the unknown future. This experience teaches me that the very essence of faith is to trust that which I cannot name.

The challenge of faith during the crisis of limits is often an invitation to sit silently before God and to immerse myself in the spiritual emptiness and restlessness that I am feeling. It is not a sign that I am no longer a believer; it is not a sign that somehow I have expunged God from my life. Rather it is a sign that I am giving up some of the neat and secure images of God that have worked so well for me but no longer make sense in terms of the person that I have become.

I may be more willing to walk through the barren desert of depression when I find that it is often in my wilderness experiences that God chooses to make himself known to me. I am heartened during this journey by an image of a God who walks with his people through feast and famine, a God who through the Cross participates in the suffering and pain of human life. During the crisis of limits, I am invited to give up an image of a God who keeps me insulated from conflict or pain, one who protects me and offers me safety and security. Rather I begin to see God as the power behind my capacity to undergo and overcome the crises of human life.

Crisis of Ministry. A change in or loss of my faith

perspective will inevitably have overtones in the exercise of my ministry. This is yet another dimension by which the crisis of limits may be initiated for me. Occupational restlessness can be detected in my moments of solitude. Have I stretched myself enough? Am I challenging myself now? I may be effective in my ministry, but does my work continue to have significant meaning for me? Does my work reflect my deeper values? Do I want to continue this work for the next 10 or 15 years? Perhaps I feel embarrassed or afraid to make a move. After all, others may think that I lack stability or am just "doing my own thing." Why shouldn't I be satisfied with what I am doing?

In today's literature on career development, there is less of a tendency to think in terms of one's lifetime as one career track. This is probably true for several reasons: a longer lifespan, a rapid change in the shape of careers, the emergence of new careers, and the increasing incorporation of new techniques and technologies. Certainly the changing needs of the church are to be taken into consideration, along with personal factors related to age, physical health, and changing interests.

Boredom with ministry and feelings of being locked in may produce a sense of discouragement or stagnation. I may have the feeling that I have outgrown my ministry. What I need is to stimulate my creative energies by shifting gears into a new ministry, perhaps from elementary school teaching into hospital chaplaincy or from high school counseling into campus ministry. It is not uncommon to discover that my boredom in ministry reflects another dimension of my life, for example, a faith crisis or a vocational crisis. If I am undergoing a radical change in my relationship to God, feeling more emptiness than nurturance, more confusion than clarity, then I can better understand why I am having a difficult time preparing my homilies, trying to teach my religion classes, or visiting my patients in the hospital. Here I learn of the pervasive quality of the crisis of limits.

Reflections about the meaning of my ministry may be overshadowed by a flight into overwork and frantic activity. Workaholism is a midlife disease that almost certainly points to the inability to establish appropriate distance between myself and my work. This blurring of boundaries may indicate an escapist or defensive posture, namely that I do not want to allow myself time to think about the direction of my life. Often, to my dismay, I discover that work is the only place where I feel good about myself and where I build a sense of self-worth. The inability to set limits around my work life, coupled with unawareness of my interpersonal needs, is what usually creates burnout. This experience tells me that I need to radically reassess what work means in my life.

Crisis of Sexuality and Intimacy. A common realization in midlife is that we are still struggling to come to a better understanding and more genuine

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acceptance of ourselves as sexual persons. In looking back, many of us become aware that our own sexual awakening in adolescence and young adulthood may have been postponed or foreclosed. For many reasons, mostly connected with the wholesale repression of sexuality and the excessive paranoia over the issue of "particular friendships," the message was communicated that sexuality was always to be considered a grave and potentially dangerous matter. The silence around sexuality only served to confirm our worst suspicions that we were the only ones who felt bothered and unsettled about it.

Since sexuality was equated with genitality, many of us were convinced that a sexual thought would turn into a sexual act in a matter of seconds. So much energy was spent in repressing sexuality that we wound up becoming obsessed by it and therefore giving it far too much importance in our lives. Perhaps we did not feel free to talk about these concerns with superiors for fear that we would be judged unfit for religious life. Much of our early training in religious life presented celibacy as an ultimate decision with little acknowledgment of or tolerance for the gradualness with which one matures into the celibate life.

The questioning, reassessing, and rethinking that occur in the crisis of limits dislodge from my unconscious what has been foreclosed, postponed, or unfinished. I find that I can no longer escape the reality that I am a sexual human being with a particular set of feelings, beliefs, and attitudes about sexuality. As a result of experiencing strong and persistent sexual stirrings and urges, often of an involuntary nature, I find that I possess a mounting curiosity to learn more about the unique language

of my sexuality. I am growing to realize the link between various changes in my body and more frequent occasions of intense sexual longing. I see more clearly the relationship in midlife between serious physical illness and increased sexual desire. Why is it that when I am isolated from my closest friends I feel more vulnerable to bouts of heightened sexual fantasizing?

Perhaps one of the things I am learning at midlife is how my sexuality is revealed by my personality structure. For example, my general tendency to be somewhat compulsive about my life may explain why my sexual feelings or behavior might have a driven quality. Or a passivity in my personality may reveal itself in behavioral patterns that are manipulative and seductive on one hand or approval seeking and ingratiating on the other. I begin to learn ways that personality reveals sexuality and sexuality reveals personality.

INTIMACY NOT OPTIONAL

Concerning my need for intimacy, the midlife crisis of limits may teach me a basic truth about myself: intimacy for me as a celibate is not optional. I need a network of people with whom I can relate in a variety of contexts. A few are my closest and dearest friends, those intimates with whom I can mutually share the deepest and most personal parts of my life. Another set of friends emerges from my life in community. These are persons with whom I share a common vision and experience a sense of mutual support. My family form yet another circle of relationships that I as a celibate continue to develop. Moreover, I may discover that being close to a few families and married couples is an enriching experience, as a source of both support and reality testing. Work colleagues and the larger population to whom I minister create an even more extensive network of relationships.

In assessing the history of my relationships, I may become painfully aware of how I have neglected to nurture and respond to those I call my closest friends. Perhaps, a few broken relationships ago, I decided that intimacy for me as a celibate was too difficult to develop and that the pain and confusion involved were not worth it. I can recall how much I enjoyed the initial experience of exuberance and exhilaration in some of my friendships, but I failed to learn more about the tensions of loving over time. I am struck to find that there is no one in my present life whom I can call a close friend. It could be that almost by default I have given myself over too exclusively to my work and other projects. Sadly, even though I have many contacts and call many people my friends, I experience repeated periods of weighty loneliness.

Sexual genital behavior may begin or intensify during the midlife crisis of limits. The fact that I may experiment with or express myself through genital behavior in no way releases me from the

responsibility and accountability I have to myself and others to learn its meaning and direction. Sexual behavior is expressive of particular needs, whether it be a genuine expression of mutual love or an attempt to reinforce my poor self-concept as a person. It is important to examine how this behavior fits into the whole picture of my personality, my stage in life, and my commitment to a celibate life-style.

Achieving a new consolidation of myself as a sexual person who is choosing and rechoosing to live a celibate life will demand that I work hard to learn the revelation contained in my sexual experiences. Sometimes in a relationship with another, the temptation is to resolve the issue prematurely and unilaterally, but this step might only be indicative of another pattern of foreclosure. An appropriate response necessitates that I work out the sexual dimension of the relationship with the other person involved. The relationship may end or it may be changed; for now, I commit myself to a period of "sweating it out." Perhaps I have learned that talking to a trusted friend or wise counselor helps me to keep myself open and truthful. I know from past experience that if I ignore my feelings or fail to work honestly through this issue, I will pay later—and probably pay a greater price for my foreclosure.

This crisis of limits leads me to develop new beliefs about intimacy and sexuality. Going against much of what I have assumed to be true about myself, I now feel drawn to be known as the person that I have become. Increasingly, I want to share myself with trusted others and learn appropriate expressions of friendship and intimacy that are consistent with my own personality and my celibate commitment. I feel challenged to be a more loyal and faithful friend, one whose growing sense of interior autonomy makes for a less possessive and more dependable person. The crisis of limits invites me to a basic reorientation to the truth about myself as a sexual person for whom intimacy is not optional.

RESOLUTIONS TO THE CRISIS OF LIMITS

By now you are probably asking, How long can I expect the crisis of limits to last? What are some signals to indicate that I am approaching a healthy resolution of the crisis?

First, there is no set time frame for the crisis of limits. Depending on several factors, some may be involved in this growth crisis for a few months; others may find that the experience lasts a year or two or more. I should have a sense that the crisis is coming to an end when my need for creating certain stability zones in my life is greater than my need to continue exploring various options and possibilities.

My readiness for commitment and recommitment represents a healthy ending to the ques-

The midlife crisis of limits may teach me a basic truth about myself: intimacy for me as a celibate is not optional

tioning and reassessing begun during the crisis of limits. It is important to check my reasons for wanting to resolve the crisis. Is my desire for stability arising from an inordinate need for security and control? Am I denying or rationalizing the internal distress and turmoil I am feeling? Or am I now ready to resolve the crisis because I am honestly facing myself?

FORECLOSED AND PATTERNED RESOLUTIONS

Two kinds of resolution to the crisis of limits constitute a continuum: foreclosed and patterned. Foreclosed resolutions are premature, too facile, and often the result of resistance to change due to a defensive distortion of the truth about myself and my world. There is a heavy investment in security for its own sake and a need for what Erikson called terminal clarity. Because of a tendency to one-sidedness, foreclosed individuals will have little tolerance for the inevitable ambivalence and ambiguity that midlife brings. I hold tightly to an exclusionary self-image that does not incorporate the discrepancies in my life.

A foreclosed resolution to the crisis of limits is often manifest in my tendency to blame others or outside forces for my situation. There is little or no attempt to take ownership for my life because underneath the image of iron-clad certitude that I project is an overly dependent and fearful inner child. Foreclosed resolutions may be evidenced through excessive possessiveness of others or a tendency toward overwork and frantic activity. Having developed an estranged relationship with myself, I find that many of my relationships tend to be somewhat mythologized, swinging on a pendulum

from overidealization to devaluation. Foreclosed resolutions are basically counterfeit solutions to the crisis of limits in that while they appear to be workable on the surface ultimately they short-circuit the process of growth and exact a heavier price later on in life.

Indicative of the patterned resolutions to the crisis of limits is the ability to live with the incompleteness of the process while still establishing sufficient rootedness and direction for the next phase of adult life. I emerge a little less certain of the answers but more confident about the course my life is taking. I acknowledge the losses and changes incurred in the crisis of limits and accept them for what they are: sources of new data about myself. Rather than disown my past or the aspects of my personality that I find problematic or unacceptable, I attempt to acknowledge more openly the ambivalently held dimensions that I now know constitute the person I have become.

The reality-testing exercises of the crisis of limits have helped me in the process of reorientation to the truth about myself. I am better at owning what I had disowned, acknowledging the still unresolved aspects of my past, and tempering some of my perfectionistic tendencies. My judgment has been seasoned by the crisis of limits; I see things more clearly while still appreciating their complexity.

Being more truthful about my own limitations and blind spots has helped me to become a more compassionate person. Having learned to be less punitive and uncompromising with myself frees me to walk with others as an empathetic companion. Being available to others has taught me something about being available to myself. I have learned that when I am clear about who I am and can affirm the truth about myself, there is a better chance that I will learn to give myself to others in ways that are more believable, honest, and trustworthy.

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LIFE AFTER YOUTH:

The Midlife Transition and Its Aftermath

SEAN D. SAMMON, F.M.S., Ph.D.

When you've been through a death-threatening experience," former Iran hostage Morehead Kennedy was quoted as saying, "you are suddenly confronted with your real self. Most of us go through life chasing after a person who never really exists: our *idea* of ourself." Elaborating on his observation, Kennedy recalled the advice given to the returned Americans by a psychiatrist: "Don't try to chase after an idealized self. Come to terms with the person you really are." These comments summarize well the developmental tasks that confront midlife men and women: accepting one's own eventual mortality and beginning the journey away from early adulthood and its experimental quality toward the inward focus of the middle years. As part of these efforts, people evaluate their past life decisions and accomplishments, along with the direction and meaning of the preceding four decades or so. They reexamine early dreams and values and attempt to understand just how these ideals have been lived out or omitted from the fabric of their lives. Oscar Wilde described this developmental dilemma cogently: "The gods have two ways of dealing harshly with us, the first is to deny us our dreams, and the second is to grant them."

In recent years, interest in the transition at midlife has grown rapidly. More people are asking: What is this transition about? What are its characteristics? Is it a normal part of adulthood? Can one survive it to find greater integrity and happiness in the middle years? Simply stated, men and women are wondering if in fact there is life after youth.

To develop a full understanding of the middle years and the specific developmental tasks they demand, we must explore several aspects of the

cycle of adulthood. In the first place, common fallacies about the psychological development of adults need to be dispelled. Second, a common language about adulthood must be developed. Third, those periods in the life cycle preceding and following the transition at midlife need examination. To show how to accomplish these tasks, the different eras of the adult years will be outlined. These overlapping, 25-year spans include early adulthood, middle adulthood, late adulthood, and late, late adulthood. Next, life periods of change and stability will be described, and "novice" adulthood and the mature years will be examined. In conclusion, practical ways of coping with the dramatic changes characteristic of the transition at midlife will be offered. But first, additional descriptive information about the transition at midlife is needed.

MIDLIFE TRANSITION DESCRIBED

Antonio Gramsci said it well in *Prison Notebooks*: "The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appears." This four- to five-year period of life evaluation and change begins about age 40. At its outset early adulthood is dying, but the era of middle adulthood is not yet born. The period between these two events—the midlife transition—is important in the life of every man and woman for several reasons.

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First, it is at this time that people begin to face the reality of their own eventual death. Here is the core of the transition at midlife: the experience of one's mortality. Many young adults, for example, identify easily with the late William Saroyan's quip, "Everybody has got to die, but I believe an exception [will] be made in my case." People at midlife, however, are compelled to face the fact that they have joined the ranks of those for whom death may soon be a personal experience. Three occurrences conspire to convince them of this fact: (1) the death or increasing dependence of parents, older relatives, colleagues, and friends, (2) the unexpected death of contemporaries, and (3) their own physical decline.

Second, the transition at midlife serves as a bridge between early adulthood and the era of middle adulthood, which continues until about age 65. In moving from one era to the next, individuals become aware of the gap that exists between what they once dreamed of becoming and what they have in fact become. The characteristics of the midlife transition include feelings of depression and emptiness and the task of mourning missed opportunities, decisions made or avoided, and experiences pursued or denied. Those parts of an individual neglected or inhibited in earlier years clamor now for attention and expression. Obviously, the period of midlife can be painful. But it is important for midlifers to come to realize that the conventional wisdom about adult stability is a fallacy.

FALLACIES ABOUT THE ADULT YEARS

Conventional wisdom maintains that children grow and develop, whereas adults only age. For many years educational institutions, social scientists, and some members of the helping professions sustained the myth that significant change does not occur during the adult years. For example, college, graduate, and professional school curricula have traditionally emphasized only two major aspects of developmental psychology: childhood and adolescence. Check your local college library. The number of texts and monographs examining childhood and the teen years will be impressive, but the search for information about adulthood will not be as fruitful. Until recently, growth observed during the adult years was judged to be erratic and unpredictable. The term *middlescence* was applied to those individuals manifesting developmental changes, but they were often tolerantly but firmly dismissed.

The life experience of men and women, however, contradicts this stagnant view of human development. Too many people are testifying that more dramatic change has taken place in their lives *after* the adolescent years than before. Too often these internal changes, with their accompanying confusion, exhilaration, anger, guilt, emptiness, and pe-

riodic depression, are not shared with others. This is partly because of the lack of a common frame of reference or even a language with which to examine and describe development during the adult years.

The task of developing a framework is a challenging one. A story from Idries Shah's *Tales of the Dervishes* illustrates the dilemmas involved: Only blind men lived in a city behind Gohr. When a king and his army arrived and camped near the city they brought an elephant with them. The town's inhabitants were awed by tales of this creature and, wanting to learn more about it, rushed out in search of the elephant. The blind men were forced to get their information by touching the animal. One man reported to his fellow citizens that the elephant was a "large rough thing, wide and broad like a rug." Another, having felt its trunk, insisted that the creature was rather "like a straight and hollow pipe, awful and destructive." Each man's understanding of the creature was incomplete and inaccurate. Several different characteristics of the elephant would have to be explored before any of the blind men could give an accurate composite description of it.

To avoid a similar error in naming what it means to be an adult, many different aspects of the adult experience need to be examined and discussed. A look at the seasons of the life cycle and the events shaping them begins this task.

SEASONS OF THE LIFE CYCLE

Nature tells us a great deal about the adult life cycle. An individual's life evolves through seasons or stages similar to what occurs in nature. There are new beginnings filled with a sense of springtime excitement, separations and leave-takings marked by pain and a sense of autumnal death. Feelings of well-being are associated with the summertime of life, while bleakness and despair can take on the character of one's personal New England winter.

Shaping the structure of each person's life are various forces and circumstances. Particular historical events and contemporary conditions shape people's understanding of their world, themselves, and others. For instance, many men and women who grew up during the Great Depression, the Vietnam war, or the post-Vatican Council II turmoil report the significance of those times in forming their lives, attitudes, and religious world views. They are also affected by their specific sociocultural world, ethnic group, race, socioeconomic class, religion, and political system. In addition, their various roles shape their lives. They may be parents, priests, religious sisters or brothers, friends, lovers, or members of different groups and organizations. Each circumstance shaping their lives, each role they assume during their lifetime, allows them to live out various parts of themselves.

It is important for midlifers to realize that conventional wisdom about adult stability is a fallacy

In contrast, these roles and influences may also inhibit the development of an individual's personality. In choosing to live out particular roles, men and women must necessarily neglect other aspects of their personalities. The important observation here is that no one life structure, i.e., no one way of being in the world, allows people to live out all their various dreams, values, and potential roles and personality characteristics. As a result, people need to change their life structure periodically to allow the neglected, inhibited parts of themselves to be expressed. Periods of life transition provide the means for this necessary change in life structure.

PERIODS OF TRANSITION AND STABILITY

A person's life structure does not change suddenly or capriciously, nor does it remain static. Rather, it evolves through a series of alternating periods of stability and transition, lasting six to seven years and four to five years, respectively.

Although some change does occur, in general one's basic life structure remains constant during a stable period. This type of period has three critical phases in which individuals (1) make certain important choices about their lives, (2) begin to build a life structure around these choices, and (3) work to attain particular goals and values within this structure. For example, a college-age woman decides to be a lawyer, an important life choice. In moving toward a stable period of her life, she will build a structure around this decision by first determining whether she has the necessary qualifications for admission to law school. Then she will

apply to educational programs that suit her career goals and aspirations, find financial sources to support her schooling, take the necessary admission exams, participate in interviewing, receive acceptance, and begin her studies. The young woman will have to carefully organize her curriculum to integrate it with her values and goals. Eventually she will complete her formal legal training, pass the bar exam, and begin practice.

In contrast, during a period of transition people terminate their existing life structure and work toward initiating a new one within which to live during the ensuing stable period. Transitional periods are keys in the process of self-renewal. They share three characteristics: (1) an ending, followed by (2) a seemingly unproductive time out during which a person feels disconnected from people and things in the past and emotionally unconnected to the present, and finally, (3) a new beginning. During a transition, men and women reappraise what has happened in their lives, explore possibilities for change in themselves and their world, and eventually move toward making certain choices that will form the basis for their new life structure. This period is marked by a feeling of being up in the air, which is endurable if it is part of a movement toward a desired end. To many transitional men and women, however, it appears unrelated to any larger or beneficial pattern and is hence quite distressing.

On closer examination, one discovers that every transition begins with an ending. Some individuals, for example, report the experience of stagnation or the feeling of being in a rut. For others, the transition is accompanied by a change in circumstances such as the death of a loved one, an outstanding personal achievement or failure, or a new job or relationship. Even transitional situations that appear to be new beginnings include the ambivalent experience of letting go.

People's particular style of dealing with terminations will influence their approach to a life transition. One man may dash away from any ending. He frequently leaves a job a day ahead of schedule to avoid awkward and painful goodbyes. By contrast, another man may linger at any possible ending, reluctant to let go of parts of himself, an experience, or a situation. Whether one's style of ending is abrupt and change-denying or slow and gradual, it will influence one's approach to any life change.

Every transition also ends with a beginning. One enters a period of stability and feels as though a new chapter of life has opened. At such a time, people report that their attention is more and more focused on the future and that they are less occupied with the task of reevaluating the past.

Between the time of ending and new beginning, there is an important fallow period, which is at the heart of all transitions. Experience indicates that a person must surrender to the emptiness of this time and not struggle to escape it. An understanding of life transitions is a necessary part not only of the

On closer examination, one discovers that every transition begins with an ending

cycle of dying and rising but also of Christian belief. The death to life myth is central to nature, to Christianity, and to an individual's life. The Lenten season in the Christian churches, for example, is a fallow in-between time during which believers are encouraged to reflect seriously on the Lord's life and on their own spiritual journey. For some, fasting and penance mark the season. For all, it ends with the glorious new beginning of the Resurrection and the Easter season.

TRANSITIONS TAKE YEARS

Several important factors should be noted in this discussion of transitional periods. First, every transition lasts for an average of four to five years. The changes that occur during these periods are not overnight events. They evolve over many months, even years.

Second, people need to actively explore new ways of being in the world so that choices made in initiating a new life structure are not the end product of an isolated intellectual exercise. John Coleman, former president of Haverford College, did this well. During a two-month sabbatical, he worked as a sanitation collector, ditch digger, and sandwich man in a Boston restaurant. On his return, his surprised faculty raised some pointed questions about his sanity. To Haverford students who had questions about the direction they wanted their lives to take and whether a college education should have a place in that journey, Coleman reported that he had often given this advice: Experience something very different from that with which you are familiar; put yourself into life circumstances that will throw your everyday life into sharp re-

lief. In this way, you may be better able to make serious life decisions about problems that you feel need resolution. Coleman took his own advice seriously and was pleased with both the experience and the results. He later used the knowledge gained during his sabbatical when he became president of a foundation, reshaping its field of activity so that its projects included the lives of blue-collar workers.

Transitional periods take time, necessitate exploring new ways of being in the world, and call forth an individual's style for dealing with endings in life. Regardless of individual differences, these times of reevaluation and change have an impact on people's relationships, commitments, work, and understanding of their personality and world. During a transition, men and women learn that their previous life structure is now inadequate. As a result career, ministry, marriage, relationships of various sorts, and major life commitments must be reexamined. Feelings of disengagement, disenchantment, and disorganization that accompany a life transition are normal and necessary aspects of adulthood. Painful as they may seem, these periods are necessary because they assist men and women in moving from one era of the life cycle to the next.

ERAS OF THE LIFE CYCLE

For the purposes of this discussion, the years of adulthood can be divided into early adulthood, middle adulthood, late adulthood, and late, late adulthood. As one of these eras is winding down, another is already getting under way. Early adulthood encompasses the period from one's early twenties to midlife at about the early forties. Beginning with midlife and continuing to about age 65, an individual experiences middle adulthood. Late adulthood follows until late, late adulthood get under way at about age 80.

People are moved from era to era by the fundamental changing character of their lives. For instance, a woman in her early forties may notice that she is reassessing the direction and meaning of her commitments, relationships, and involvements. Her life's character will be influenced importantly by her growing awareness that at present she has probably lived more years than the number that lie ahead for her. Over the course of a few years, this woman will begin to make changes as she moves from early to middle adulthood. Each era has its distinguishing characteristics.

EARLY ADULTHOOD

In the course of a man's or woman's life, stable and transitional periods follow one another. The early adult era begins at about age 17 or 18 with a four- to five-year transitional period referred to as the early adult transition. During this time, people begin work on certain developmental tasks such as separating from their family of origin, forming a

dream, setting an occupational direction, and changing the balance of dependence and independence in their lives. As men and women address these concerns in some rudimentary form, they begin to define themselves as adults within an adult world.

Separating from one's family of origin is an important example. Some people accomplish this task by going off to college, entering a religious community or seminary, beginning a first job, or joining the armed forces. Regardless of an individual's choice, the tasks of the transition period influence the decisions that one makes and the character of the life structure that one develops. Some individuals may marry or enter a religious community partly to separate from their family of origin. Later in life, each person must deal with the consequences of these choices.

The early adult transition is followed by a fairly stable period of several years during which individuals work more intensively on getting into the adult world as they begin to fashion a preliminary adult identity. This pursuit is accomplished by making some choices about occupation, relationships, and style of living.

In deciding on certain choices, people are faced with two conflicting issues. On one hand, they need to create a stable life, i.e., settle down, be responsible, and make something of themselves. On the other, they need to explore their world and test out the possibilities for adult living. During the period in which they are attempting to enter the adult world, men and women should avoid making strong commitments so that they will eventually have as many options to choose from as possible. Few, however, are able to maintain the delicate balancing act required to achieve such a feat. Instead, some make early commitments, others fail to commit themselves to anyone or anything, and still others commit themselves in certain areas while choosing to remain uncommitted in others. Each commitment pattern and choice of life direction result in later consequences that first manifest themselves during a transitional period beginning around age 30.

AGE THIRTY TRANSITION

This transition has been referred to by psychiatrist Daniel Levinson as a "tremendous gift and burden." Its onset is often signaled by a vague sense of uneasiness and depression. People ask: What is missing from my life? and What parts of my life and myself must I change or give up to be fulfilled?

The transition at age 30 allows men and women the opportunity to make necessary changes in their life structure. Those individuals who made commitments during their early adult transition may now ask: Did I commit myself too soon? Did I explore sufficiently my options for adult living? Was I too young to know just what I was getting

into? In contrast, those who spent their twenties exploring the possibilities for adult living may wonder: Do I mean anything to anyone? What am I doing with my life? and What is its direction? These individuals often feel rootless and experience both internal and external pressure to settle down and make some commitments. During this transition, people will need to scrutinize their life structure and make any changes necessary to capitalize on this chance for growth.

Much of the questioning experienced during the transition at age 30 relates to a person's dream, or ideal. This dream first emerges during the adolescent years as an answer to the question, What shall I do with my adult life? It is a guiding vision or myth that informs a person about his or her life direction. Initially, it is neither well formed nor carefully worked out. But where such a dream exists, it must play an important role in the decisions one makes, if personal fulfillment is to be achieved.

Some persons attempt to fashion a way of living out their dream during their twenties. At about age 30 they begin to evaluate their efforts and to make changes and modifications in their life structure so that it is more in line with the spirit of their dream. At the same time, others may build a life structure that allows them to live out only part of their dream. At age 30, they come to this transition period feeling stifled. Take the young man who entered the business world during his twenties, even though he dreamed of becoming a writer. His career choice was determined by strong family and peer pressures. He convinced himself that he would be able to carve out ample time for his creative writing after the completion of his work day. As time passed, however, he found to his regret that he had little spare time once he met his commitments to work and to his relationships with others. He became increasingly resentful when his work made additional demands on his time. Being competitive, however, he was in inner conflict because answering these demands was important for his advancement within the company. The young man felt trapped. Fortunately, his transition around age 30 will help provide him with an opportunity to address this tension. His decisions will not be easy, and some losses may be entailed as he works on these two complementary tasks: moving his life more into line with his dream and reshaping his dream to escape some of its adolescent tyranny.

Still others betray their dream and create a life structure that chokes any possibility of its taking root and flourishing. The character Eddie Anderson in *The Arrangement* was such a man. In describing this fictional person, Elia Kazan clearly outlines how Eddie missed the opportunities in his life for change and for reorienting himself so that his life would fit more closely with his dream. Yet Anderson's dream does survive and returns with a fury during his midlife transition.

At about age 30, then, men and women begin to feel a call to come home to themselves. In reworking their dreams, they need to grieve over some of their life choices, directions, and mistakes. This work is necessary because at the end of the transition, people must again commit themselves to a life structure within which they can live during the following stable period. Some recommit themselves to the structures with which they lived during their twenties, while others commit themselves to new frameworks. Even those who go back to previous life structures will find that in addressing the developmental work of the transitional period those structures have been somewhat affected. Although it may appear to be the same, in reality it is different.

Those individuals who have done the work of the transition well will advance within a fairly stable life structure during their thirties. For those whose work is flawed, however, a long, slow decline within a stable life structure begins. They start to feel hopeless and experience increasing pressure to break out and form a new life structure.

STRESSFUL NOVICE ADULTHOOD

The age span from one's early twenties to about age 40, including the transitions at early adulthood and age 30, is described as novice adulthood. This era is so characterized because people have found that it takes longer to enter the adult world than was previously imagined. In the past this transition was assumed to be completed by one's early twenties; more recently it has become apparent that work on this period of adulthood continues throughout one's twenties and into one's early thirties.

Novice adulthood is both a time of psychological and biological abundance and of contradiction and stress. In coming to the end of novice adulthood, men and women report that they feel less anxious, that their world is more predictable, and that they have learned what it means to be an adult. They no longer feel as though they are impersonating an adult.

This realization is partly due to the successful completion of several tasks: learning ways of relating to other men and women, feeling increasingly more confident in one's life work, and reducing one's sense of vulnerability. By the end of novice adulthood, most people have begun to establish some deep and sustaining friendships, have formed an occupation or career, and have a clearer understanding of what they want to do with their adult life.

Although similar patterns and a certain amount of order exist in the lives of most adults, this conformity in no way minimizes the rich variety to be found among people. Consider the weaver. Aside from the quiet patience that most weavers appear to possess, a fascinating part of their craft is that

from the same color and type of yarn, they are able to weave fabrics with endless varieties of patterns. All adults have the same ability when fashioning their adult years. Although many elements of adulthood are held in common, the rich tapestry that individuals weave with their lives is unique and not reproducible.

Thus, men and women face several developmental tasks during their novice adulthood. They must fashion a dream, form relationships with others, and construct a ministry or career that will give flesh to some of their values and goals. Mentors can assist; they can mother and father young people in a nonpossessive way that will help them facilitate their dreams. Whether work on the developmental tasks of this era has been done well or poorly, the outcome has implications for the transition at midlife, which begins several years later.

MIDDLE ADULTHOOD

"In the middle of the journey of my life, I came to myself within a dark wood where the straight way was lost. Ah, how hard it is to tell of that wood, savage and harsh and dense. The thought of which renews my fear. So bitter is it that death is hardly more," wrote Dante in the *Divine Comedy*. Some commentators interpret this excerpt as an allegorical description of the gates of hell. Others argue that it is more truly a reflection of the poet's state of mind as he went into exile far from his beloved native city. Still others suggest that Dante was reflecting on his own midlife journey as savage, harsh, and dense. In that case, the poet's words would indicate just how high the stakes are at midlife.

Middle adulthood begins with the midlife transition and continues until people reach their mid-sixties. In general, people appear reluctant to move from the era of early adulthood into the middle years for several reasons. First, all change leads to loss. At midlife, people experience a loss of their youthful illusions or dreams. Furthermore, they must rework their self-image as they come to terms with their imperfections and those of others. Even as they undertake these tasks, many people fear that their future will not be as good as their past.

Second, in crossing the bridge between early adulthood and middle adulthood, men and women lose a sense of easy immortality. They begin to feel death in the marrow of their bones. There is, for example, no longer a generation standing as a buffer between them and death. Instead, middle-aged people become aware that they are now the dominant generation in society, looked to as a buffer against death by younger persons. The death of a contemporary is still eulogized as a tragedy but now serves as an acute reminder of one's own possible death through an accident or an illness. Even though an individual's physical changes may be

Many elements of adulthood are held in common, yet the rich tapestry people weave with their lives is unique and not reproducible

measurably insignificant, at midlife graying or thinning hair is a grim reminder of age and ultimately of mortality.

Near the end of their thirties, people once again feel the need to evaluate their lives. For those who have spent their early adulthood becoming somebody rather than doing something they love, their victory will now seem hollow. Men and women will begin to ask themselves: What have I done with my life? and What have I done with myself? What are my greatest talents and how am I using them or wasting them? What do I truly want for myself and for others? What have I done with my early dream? and What do I want to do with it now? What do I truly give to and get from other people? Is it possible for me to live in a way that best combines my talents, current desires, values, and aspirations? During the transition at midlife, people question virtually every aspect of their life. The answers can be upsetting.

Elia Kazan tells how Eddie Anderson has lost all touch with his Greek heritage to the point of changing his name from Evangelah to Edwin and eventually to Eddie to satisfy the tempo and lifestyle of the California advertising firm in which he becomes an executive. More important, in the process Eddie also betrays his dream of becoming a writer. He marries a woman who fits in with the betrayal of his dream and develops friends and a life pattern that almost choke his dream to death.

The tale of Eddie Anderson begins just after he has almost killed himself in a car accident. He himself is unsure that it was actually an accident. As Eddie's story unfolds, we find example after example of his betrayal of his dream. Although sexually inti-

mate with a number of women, he is emotionally intimate with no one. His talents have been twisted into writing advertising copy and glibly soothing his advertising clients' bruised egos. One day, Eddie Anderson quits. Predictably, his contemporaries are frightened and view him as being out of his mind. His wife attempts to have him certified as insane, and the family lawyer is sent to talk some sense into him. The story of Eddie Anderson is, in the end, the tale of one man's attempt to return to the spirit of his dream and to rework it into his life so that he is not tyrannized by its adolescent aspects but rather revitalized by its life.

Midlife men and women, like Anderson, face several developmental tasks. First, they must deal with the disparity between who they are and who they have dreamed of becoming. Those failing to realize their cherished dreams must come to terms with their disappointment and settle on new choices around which to build their lives. Those others who have realized some of their early dreams need to consider the meaning and value of their success. Midlifers might have to mourn the person they have not and may now never become. In reappraising their lives, they must ask: What is the fate of my youthful dreams? What possibilities exist for change in the future?

Second, during midlife adults begin to demythologize themselves. Young men and women need to believe that they are larger than life so that they are able to ambition what is expected and asked of them. At midlife, however, they need to "de-illusion" themselves to dispel a false sense of enchantment and to face their own personal poverty and limitations. In doing so, these individuals may recognize that some of their beliefs about themselves and the workings of their world are simply not true. This work of disenchantment gives rise to a myriad of feelings: disappointment, grief, sadness, depression, but also wonder and a sense of liberation. The experience is quite similar to losing a family member or friend through death. The mourning takes time. Just as one's relationship with a loved one is changed but not ended by death, the relationship with oneself does not end at midlife; rather, we are transformed through the process of disenchantment.

Third, midlife adults must work more seriously than before to become individuals. Carl Jung called this effort the process of individuation and highlighted two important aspects: the limited growth of the individual during early adulthood and the unique opportunities for human development at midlife. He observed that in spite of changes people go through during their twenties and thirties, most arrive at midlife not much different from the person they were in their early twenties. The transition at midlife, however, gives them a chance to make more serious life changes and to chart new directions. This work of individuation is expedited when people pursue the tasks of developing, reconciling, and integrating their various polarities. An explo-

At midlife adults need to “de-illusion” themselves to dispel a false sense of enchantment, to face their own personal poverty and limitations

ration here of the term archetype will help clarify the use of the word polarity.

ARCHETYPES FOSTER DEVELOPMENT

A polarity is an archetype, i.e., an image established over thousands of generations that comes to exist in every person's mind. Each person, for example, has an understanding of what it means to be young or old aside from the chronological meaning of these words. To be young is to be lively, growing, and heroic but also impulsive and inexperienced. By contrast, being old can mean wise, influential, and mature but also at times tyrannical and unconnected to life.

Archetypes either develop to a high degree or remain dormant. Jung observed that developing one's archetypes is an important part of becoming an individual. They evolve in every person from rather undifferentiated ideas into increasingly complex internal images and give a person the potential for further development. For instance, when people consider their image of God, they will find (if they have worked to develop this archetype) that God's image in them is much more complex and differentiated in their adult development than it was when they were six or seven years old.

Three of Jung's polarities are important for this discussion: (1) separate-belonging, (2) creative-destructive, and (3) masculine-feminine. The development and integration of the first is necessary for development of one's spiritual life, the second is useful for resolving lifelong angers, and the third is an invisible partner in many of our relationships.

The separate-belonging polarity enables one to deal with the issues of solitude and belonging. It is

important for young adults to achieve membership in their wider society and to be an affirmed part of it. A devastating experience for many young people is when they are not accepted by their peers. At midlife, however, men and women need to understand their own solitude. Many fear solitude because society equates it with loneliness, but these two states are quite different. More important, in fleeing from solitude individuals forfeit their chance of discovering many aspects of themselves and of their life with God.

In contrast, it is interesting to observe that in moving toward greater solitude, people become less dependent on others. They achieve a better balance between their needs and those of society. In attending to themselves in a way that is not self-centered, men and women become less controlled by their ambitions and dependencies. Hence, they can be involved in better ways with others and can contribute to society in a more selfless manner. Simply stated, to be able to care deeply for others, people must also care deeply for themselves. This caring, however, concerns itself with human development and integrity rather than material possessions.

NEW UNDERSTANDINGS AND IMAGES NEEDED

Another interesting observation about solitude is that people who seek it also create an opportunity to deepen their spiritual life. At the same time faith is shaped by the initiatives of grace and the Spirit, the integration of the separate-belonging polarity provides fertile ground for the movement of the Holy Spirit in people's lives. At every major life transition, men and women are presented with the opportunity for shaping the new era's life structure and for finding new, enriching ways of being in faith. They will fail if they insist on clinging rigidly to their prior understandings of faith and images of God. In developing and integrating the separate-belonging polarity individuals must take the opportunity to complete this task successfully.

The creative-destructive polarity and its resolution have serious implications for a person's lifelong angers. Each individual has the power not only to be tremendously creative but to hurt and destroy others intentionally or unintentionally. During life, men and women will hurt others and will in turn be hurt by them. During the transition at midlife they must come to terms with this reality and with their grievances against others for perceived injustices. Again, this process involves mourning and a letting go. Failure to undertake this process gives rise to individuals who refuse to surrender lifelong hurts and who continue a romance with perceived injustices long after midlife and into their mature years. Their energy and creativity are sapped by their rage and self-righteous indignation. As “angry martyrs,” they ultimately turn their destructiveness on themselves.

To establish relationships of intimacy, people need to develop and integrate their masculine-feminine polarity. Because of this fact and the considerable attention this polarity has received in recent years, it will be discussed more completely than the other two polarities. Apparently, every person is androgenous, both masculine and feminine. A man has an unconscious feminine side, and a woman's unconscious side is masculine. Although each side of the polarity has both positive and negative aspects, each has an enlivening spirit for the individual.

The development and integration of the masculine-feminine polarity are important for at least two reasons: (1) to understand and discard sexual stereotypes and (2) to establish relationships of intimacy. In appraising the first reason, the terms masculine and feminine refer to the *meaning* of gender and not to biological gender. Every culture has its gender images. In America, little boys are taught not to cry, while their female counterparts are warned against being tomboys. The indoctrination with gender images begins very early.

Rigid adherence to these images can give rise to skewed psychological and emotional development. Totally masculine men may be unable to be emotionally close to women because they regard them as either maternal or sexual, but not both. The "Marlboro man" is a case in point: for some, he is a characterization of the American male hero, a loner in need of no one. Today the Marlboro man seldom rides the plains in cigarette commercials; on billboards and in magazines all over the country he more often looks as though he shops for clothes at Bloomingdale's and has his hair styled by Vidal Sassoon. Nonetheless, the loner image of detachment and hard, tough exterior remains.

The stereotypical woman is presented as seductive or dim-witted. Either she is used as a ploy to increase sales of the Mercury Bobcat car or her ideas are grouped with the babblings of television's Edith Bunker. These characterizations highlight a failure to develop and reconcile the masculine-feminine polarity. Although the women's movement and the more nascent men's movement may eventually help eradicate these stereotypes, it would be foolhardy to believe that the barriers have been torn down when consciousness has merely been raised a little.

INTEGRATION REQUIRED FOR INTIMACY

The second reason—to establish intimate relationships—for developing and integrating the masculine-feminine polarity is quite important. The transition at midlife appears to provide an optimal circumstance in which to undertake this task successfully. In early adulthood, for instance, men often experience their feminine side as dangerous, while women do not want to be thought of as too masculine. Young women may shrink from express-

ing their natural assertiveness and competence because their masculine side is too threatening to them, while young men fear the implications of their more intuitive qualities.

When individuals have seriously confronted their own eventual mortality, they seem less concerned with the demands of gender images. Before this happens, young men may keep an emotional distance from women because they are reminded of their own feminine side. Along the same lines, many women keep an emotional distance from men because to become too close is to come face to face with their own masculine side.

Because one's unconscious masculine or feminine side presents such a threat, its traits are often projected onto others. When people project some aspect of the self, it is perceived as being outside themselves, as though it pertained to someone else and had little or nothing to do with them. The reality of the other person becomes obscured by the projection and he or she becomes either overvalued or undervalued. For example, when the positive aspects of a man's feminine side are projected onto a woman, she becomes highly desirable to him. She is the object of his erotic fantasies and sexual longings, and he believes that he would be fulfilled if only he could be with her and make love to her. Although flattering at first to some women, this situation may eventually become suffocating. As the woman attempts to develop her own personality in the relationship, she may find that the man begins to project negative parts of his unconscious feminine side onto her and to blame her for his moods and unhappiness. The fact is that the man has been relating to his projection and not to a real person.

By contrast, when a woman projects her unconscious masculine side onto a man, she sees him as a guide, savior, and hero. She feels as though she can only be complete through him. Yet once the relationship is viewed realistically the savior becomes an infuriating and frustrating man responsible for all the woman's disappointments and feelings of being belittled.

PROJECTION PRODUCES INFATUATION

Both these situations involving projection have very little to do with actual love or intimacy. Instead, they are states of mutual fascination and infatuation. Real love is between real people, not projections. To assist one another in the discovery and development of their unconscious masculine-feminine polarity, people have to become vulnerable to one another. Only in this way is intimacy possible. The word intimacy here has a specific meaning: allowing another person to come close enough to me so that I could possibly change. More and more in American society people first encounter each other sexually before coming to know each other in a broader and deeper sense. Although some

When individuals are seriously confronted with their own eventual mortality, they seem less concerned with the demands of gender images

people may be comfortable with sexual and physical intimacy, they are neophytes at the harder but more rewarding work of psychological, emotional, and spiritual intimacy. Falling in love, or infatuation, is only a step toward intimacy. When the infatuation dissolves and the other person emerges as he or she really is, then intimacy is possible.

In an intimate relationship, people accept responsibility for their own happiness and unhappiness; they neither expect another person to make them happy nor blame the other for their bad moods, frustrations, or problems. The state of intimacy is optimal for discovering one's masculine or feminine side.

People need to increase the possibility for intimacy with others. As individuals come to accept their own poles of masculine and feminine, they are more capable of genuine intimacy with others. The threat of closeness is lessened. Thus, by integrating this polarity and thereby growing in realistic self-knowledge and acceptance, men and women prepare themselves for the developmental tasks of the mature years.

LATE ADULTHOOD

Opportunities for development and growth continue into the final decades of a person's life. Most important, social and personal changes intensify the movement toward interiority, which for many began during the transition at midlife. As the social world of older adults changes they need to adopt new roles, make former roles more flexible, maintain their health, and compensate for declines in physical vigor. People in the mature years need to ask: Does life have any meaning? In attempting to

answer this question, they will discover that life has meaning only if their individual life does.

By contrast, those who have avoided work on developmental tasks throughout the life cycle will find that the chickens come home to roost during late adulthood. They will find their life unacceptable, complain over the shape of the past, and be unhappy over their present situation. Eventually, when they realize that little time is left to them, their dissatisfactions with life will decay into despair.

For those who have attempted to face their developmental work during previous years, there is a growth in integrity and wisdom during the mature years. They come to accept their lives and those persons important to them as something that had to be, that made them who they are, and that of necessity would permit no substitutes. They present to the coming generation a vital example of life lived well. Because they do not fear death, their children will be unafraid of the life ahead of them. Having lived with integrity, older men and women will capitalize on the unique opportunities provided by their life cycle to confront, know, and accept themselves.

SUGGESTIONS FOR COPING

People cope with the developmental tasks of midlife in many ways. Some deny that changes are taking place, while others hope that rearranging a few externals will guarantee that all will be well. Some of these interventions are genuine, others false. A false intervention is similar to a medical treatment that relieves the symptoms of a disease temporarily but does little to alter its natural course. Two such interventions are important for this discussion: workshop highs and geographical cures.

For some the solution to many of life's challenges and problems is to attend a workshop. Although workshops can be useful learning tools, they are not a panacea. But for some, a workshop is like a fix. They return from it with a momentary good feeling but quickly find that the same midlife transitional problems and difficulties remain. At the very least, the workshop is like a paid vacation. People return from it saying, "It was fun meeting people there and the person brought in to run it was really good." Workshops need to be used as they were intended, to provide useful information and to allow one to meet others facing the same challenges and difficulties. They cannot, however, act as a substitute for the hard developmental work of life transition.

The geographical cure is rooted in the belief that one's difficulties have very little to do with oneself but rather result from external causes. In attempting to solve problems, therefore, some people change locations or, more often, careers, relationships, life-styles, and commitments. The comment

of a recently divorced middle-aged man illustrates the fallacy of such a quick solution: "Sometimes I fantasize," he quipped, "about hopping on a plane to South America and starting a whole new life, but the trouble is that I know I'll be waiting for me when I get off the plane." At midlife, it will do little good to change one's external situation without also changing the self.

Both these solutions have a magical aura about them. They look for simple answers to complex questions. One hopes that by performing certain activities, one will work magical changes in the self. The user of any "magic wand" solution believes that change should be instant and painless. Belief in this magical approach dies hard. People at midlife persist in seeking unrealistic solutions to transitional problems. Even when these solutions are ineffectual, rather than believing that a magical solution has failed, they believe instead that the correct solution has not yet been found.

Genuine solutions take effort, time, and perseverance. There are several worthy of mention. First, men and women can take seriously the transition at midlife and recognize its characteristic shape. The period includes a time of disintegration during which the old order comes to an end. This ending is followed by a span of fertile emptiness during which fruitful reevaluation and change can occur. Finally, there is a new beginning.

Second, people can take their time during the transition. The developmental work of the period cannot be hurried. It is not completed in a week, a month, or even a year but rather takes about four to five years. Hence, men and women would do well to avoid acting for the sake of taking action during the midlife transition. In addition to bringing a chapter of their life to a close, people need to discover what it is they must learn for the next step they are going to take. Premature action will abort this process.

Third, individuals can recognize their need to mourn. People have to evaluate not only the person that they have become but must also mourn those parts of their personality they were unable to develop because of past decisions. The religious priest who will never be a father, the businessman who chose to forego a career in education, parents who chose to develop a relationship with their family rather than develop a talent or interest of their own—all these people need to mourn these lost parts of themselves.

Fourth, goals and values can be reexamined during the midlife transition. Men and women can use the time as an impetus for a new kind of learning about themselves and for examining what they hold to be important. They can facilitate this process by planning some idleness in their day, having a retreat space at home, or restructuring trips and vacations so that much needed leisure is attained.

Fifth, people can learn to become mentors. In assisting others to facilitate their dreams, midlifers can leave a living legacy, one more lasting than brick and stone.

Sixth, during this period individuals should resist the pressure to conform. People who take the midlife transition seriously will often frighten others. Moreover, those attempting a radical critique of themselves and their lives will encounter strong resistance from parts of themselves and from other people. It is important to resist the pressures to get back into step.

Seventh, midlife transitional men and women should find someone to talk to. Be it a good friend, counselor, or mental health professional, midlifers need someone to assist them in putting their life dilemmas and feelings into words to understand them better.

Development during the adult years is a journey homeward, a pilgrimage toward an interior life. Midlife can leave people more whole, better integrated, and more life-giving men and women. Although such maturity does not come easily, it is worth every ounce of human effort and divine grace that can be combined. The transition at midlife can be the springtime that blossoms into a most rewarding experience of the summer and autumn of life.

RECOMMENDED READING

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HELPING THE PARANOID PERSON

JAMES J. GILL, S.J., M.D.

A few weeks ago the following letter reached our editorial desk. I want to quote it in full and then try to reply to it comprehensively.

"I am a religious superior in a community of priests who teach in a small Catholic college. One of the men in our house has been extremely difficult for me to understand and deal with. Let me describe him to you. Perhaps you will be able to write some words of advice to me and other superiors or community members who have in their midst a person of similar temperament.

"This is a man in his forties who doesn't seem to trust anybody, and certainly not me. His feelings are too easily hurt. There appears to be no real joy in his life, and he has no close friends either inside or outside the community. He works very hard but never in collaboration with others. My impression is that he is always afraid that somebody is going to infringe on his rights or interfere with his well-being or way of life.

"This man quite frequently deals with his students with unwarranted severity. When he experiences failure of any sort, he invariably blames others, never himself. He hardly communicates at all with the chairman of his department or with the academic dean. He walks past the president of our college without a nod or a word of greeting. I myself generally get the same cold treatment from him. I have tried to act with friendliness and warmth toward him for several years now, but my efforts have failed to thaw his attitude one bit.

Other members of the community suggest I just write him off as a loner and stop trying to develop a better relationship with him. Do you agree? What do you think is going on inside this man? And how can I help him?"

I've given a lot of thought to this letter during the past several days and have decided that since there is likely to be a person behaving in about this same way in almost every fairly large community of men or women, it would seem a good idea to reply to it as carefully and clearly as possible. As a consequence, many superiors, community members, colleagues, spiritual directors, and religious formation personnel might be helped to cope with these puzzling people more effectively. To be of any significant assistance to them, we need first of all to understand them.

TECHNICALLY CALLED PARANOID

The person described is manifesting characteristics that fall into a pattern very familiar to clinical psychologists, social workers, psychiatrists, and other therapists. We usually encounter such individuals not as patients seeking help but as people about whom others are seriously concerned or worried. They are not exactly emotionally ill, though they suffer a great deal of distress; rather, they are persons who for many, at least, are especially difficult to live or work with. They generally prove to be irritating and frustrating to authority figures

(e.g., religious superiors, academic administrators), particularly if these concerned individuals attempt to establish a close personal relationship with them. Professionals usually refer to such people, technically, as paranoid.

The term paranoia, from which the adjective paranoid is derived, was used by Greek physicians more than 2,000 years ago. At that time it signified what lawyers today call insanity. The word means literally "thinking beside oneself." True paranoia, as encountered by psychiatrists in recent years, is a rare mental disorder of the psychosis type, which is revealed by the patient's holding fast to some relatively permanent and unshakable delusion accompanied by the preservation of clear and orderly thinking. (A delusion is a false belief that is firmly held despite objective and obvious contradictory evidence and despite the fact that other members of the culture do not share the belief.) A typical example would be a man whose intellectual capabilities are undiminished but who nonetheless believes himself to be the reincarnation of Jesus Christ.

More frequently encountered by health care professionals all over the world is a certain type of schizophrenia that is called paranoid. It is characterized by delusional thinking that is usually bizarre and has hardly any connection with reality. Examples would include patients who believe that they are being persecuted by others or that whatever happens in the environment is being directed toward them.

Far more familiar than either of these two psychotic types of illness is the paranoid personality, which everyone encounters from time to time. The priest described by his superior may well correspond with this classification. He sounds as if he is manifesting a personality disorder marked by an enduring pattern of behavior and thinking that may have been present to some extent in his childhood and was probably established by adolescence. Persons who have developed a paranoid personality generally appear to be guarded (cautious), suspicious, mistrustful of others, hypersensitive, and easily slighted. They vigilantly scan the environment, like radar, seeking clues that will confirm their suspicions or validate their prejudices. Their emotional lives are usually impoverished, they lack the experience of close friendship or love, and they tend toward social isolation. They do not experience delusions as psychotic paranoids do, but they may have "ideas of reference." In other words, they may ascribe personal significance to neutral remarks or comments. For example, if someone refers to an unpleasant odor in the room, they may feel certain that they are being humiliatingly accused of being its source.

People with a paranoid personality are usually found to be unwilling to accept responsibility for the consequences of their behavior; they blame other persons or unfavorable life circumstances for the misfortune and unhappiness in their lives. Be-

cause they are often reluctant to communicate their deeper thoughts and feelings, it is difficult for those around them to realize the distress they are experiencing. But in such intimate contexts as work situations, marital or community relationships, and particularly in relation to authority figures, difficulties almost inevitably arise.

PROJECTION OVERWORKED

Paranoid people are extraordinarily sensitive to anything unexpected; they can respond to even a slight change in the environment with severe intensification of their attention. They dread being surprised in any way. A startling sound or unanticipated change of schedule can evoke fear and resentment in them. But perhaps the most important characteristic of paranoid individuals is their tendency to overwork the ego defense mechanism called projection. By employing this unconsciously motivated tactic in an effort to avoid recognizing an undesirable or unacceptable impulse, wish, thought, or feeling, they can relocate these elements in others and treat them as realities external to themselves. For example, people experiencing a feeling of jealousy but unable to accept this as a fact are able to deny their own real experience by interpreting the behavior of others as revealing jealousy on their part. Resulting belief: "They are the ones who are jealous, not me." Another example is the man who is struggling to keep repressed a strong impulse to act in a hostile manner. He may protect his ego from being overwhelmed by such an unacceptable aggressive impulse by projecting it onto persons to whom he then responds as if they were hostile and threatening toward him.

At times, the use of the mechanism of projection does not include the transfer of content (the objectionable thought, wish, feeling, etc.) but only the substitution of an external threat or tension for an internal one. Some people, for example, are able to live with less distress by believing that they dwell in a world filled with individuals determined to mutilate them. They are unconsciously motivated to think in this paranoid way rather than accept the fact that they themselves are harboring intense sexual desires. In such cases, the threat within is denied (i.e., kept from being recognized), and an external threat is created to provide a useful, preoccupying object of concern. When people thus project an outside threat but not the content of their own denied inner functioning, they must select some person, group, organization, or power they can begin to suspect so that constant vigilance is required. Moreover, they must single out a form of maltreatment they would personally find offensive (e.g., public reprimand or humiliation) and then identify this as the current threat to their well-being. In other words, by the use of projection, paranoid people can convert their inner tension into anticipation of harm from their environment

They vigilantly scan the environment, like radar, seeking clues that will confirm their suspicions

and also into an abiding false conviction about individuals within that milieu.

Typically, paranoid individuals are inclined to think that people talking together softly in their presence are talking about them and in derogatory terms. They are also inclined to feel that they possess personal qualities like body odors or ugliness that others must find offensive. They suffer from a pitifully low self-esteem. They expect to make a poor impression on others because of their assumed lack of brilliance, dignity, will power, or physical strength. Furthermore, paranoid persons are continually defending themselves against the threat of being subjected to external control, particularly against the slightest infringement on their exercise of freedom. In psychiatrists Dana Farnsworth and Francis Braceland's book *Psychiatry, the Clergy and Pastoral Counseling*, persons manifesting a paranoid personality or character are described as "suspicious, distrustful, skeptical, aloof, antagonistic, jealous individuals who are usually able to get along reasonably well in society and compete successfully in situations where an irritable, guarded, projection-prone personality is an asset. However, many of them become engaged in an endless series of battles with their foremen, neighbors, teachers, or religious superiors."

PARANOID TRAITS REVEALED

One of the world's foremost authorities on paranoia is Harvard psychoanalyst William W. Meissner, S.J., M.D., who has made a monumental contribution to the literature of his profession

through his profound study *The Paranoid Process*. Meissner reminds us that paranoid manifestations are not limited to specifically paranoid psychiatric conditions; they can be identified in a variety of pathologic forms and at all levels of severity. Signs of paranoia, he says, can be found in normal, healthy persons as well as in the functioning of neurotic, borderline, and psychotic individuals. The paranoid traits he lists include:

1. *Centrality*. The person believes that he or she is the center of interest or attention of other people.

2. *Hypersensitivity*. The person often feels slighted, wronged, or mistreated.

3. *Facade of self-sufficiency*. The person continually attempts to defend against an underlying sense of vulnerability.

4. *Preoccupation with hidden meanings*. This may reflect the person's underlying concern with what are suspected to be the hidden motives of others, which can be expanded into a paranoid view of the environment.

5. *Concern over autonomy*. The person's sense of independence is fragile and easily threatened.

6. *Tendency to blame*. Adversity, failure, painful emotions, and unhappiness are viewed as the fault of others.

7. *Feelings of inadequacy or deficiency*. Paranoid persons are concerned about being different, outsiders. They may have a more diffuse concern over having values or beliefs different from the ones held by the people they are involved with.

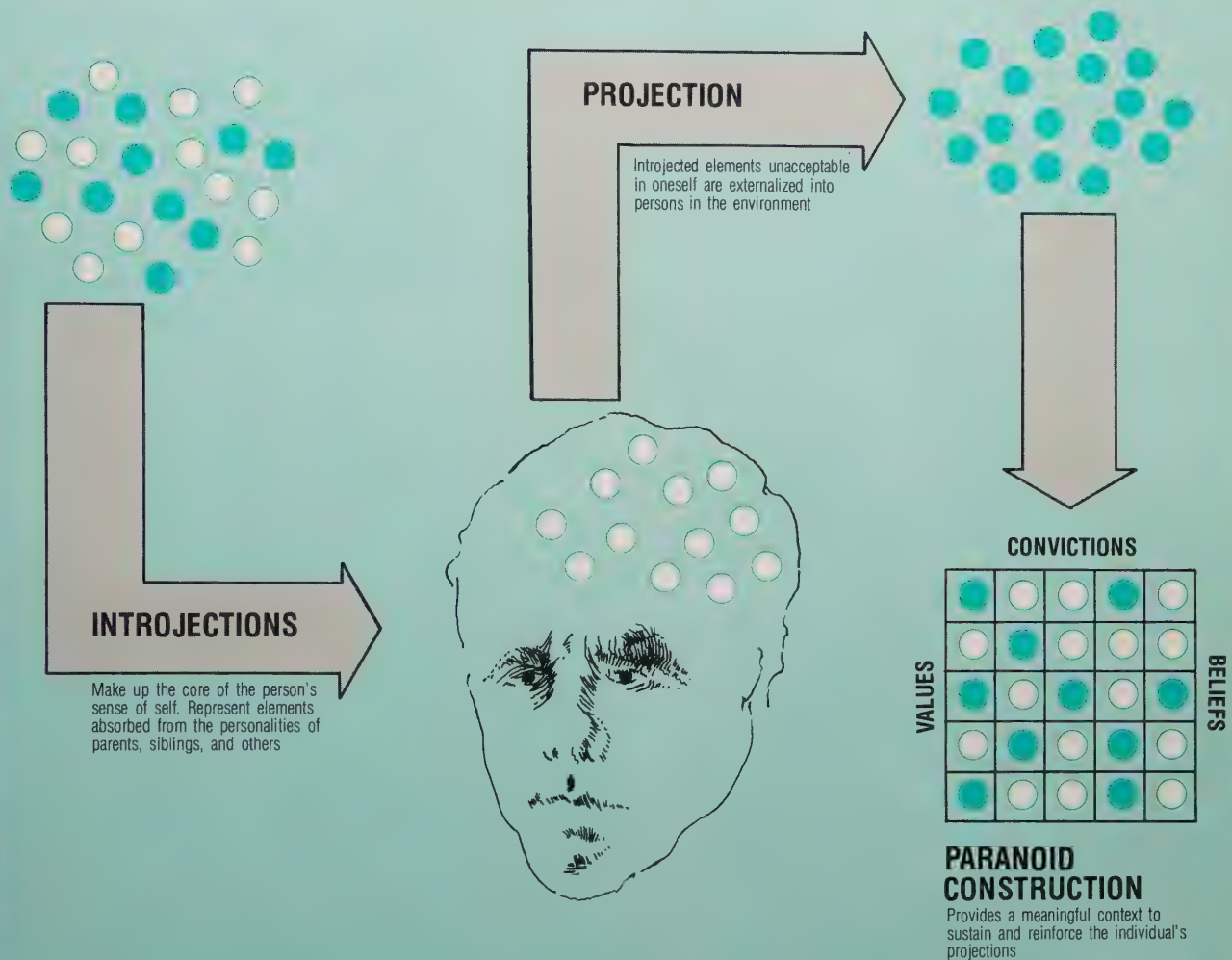
8. *Concerns over power and powerlessness*. The person loves power and often dominates others while holding the weak in contempt.

THE PARANOID PROCESS

Paranoid traits, whether they are manifested by a person with a healthy, well-functioning personality or by one who is unquestionably mentally ill, reflect the underlying mechanisms of what Meissner calls the paranoid process. These mechanisms are described in terms of three basic constructs: 1. *Introjections*. These make up the core of a person's sense of self. They represent elements from the personalities of parents, siblings, relatives, and other adults that have been encountered and absorbed (internalized) during infancy and childhood. These dynamic components of the personality, principally derived from parents, are related to aggression and narcissism. In relation to aggression, the introjected (that is, acquired by social contact) tendencies reveal themselves either in behavior that is strong, powerful, domineering, hostile, and destructive or in signs that the person views himself or herself as weak, inadequate, ineffectual, helpless, vulnerable, and victimized.

In regard to introjected narcissistic elements, people can see themselves as superior, special, privileged, entitled, even grandiose or as inferior, worthless, valueless, shameful, and humiliated. In

THE PARANOID PROCESS



the paranoid person, Meissner has observed, the victim introject (weak, inadequate) tends to predominate in the individual's subjective psychological functioning, while the aggressive aspects (strong, powerful) are projected to the outside, giving rise to the belief that hostile or destructive persecutors actually exist and imperil the person's well-being.

2. *Projection.* As just mentioned, the introjected

elements of the personality that are unacceptable in oneself are externalized into persons that are significant in the environment and sometimes later extended to include other persons in a suspected conspiratorial network. As described earlier, this is an ego defense mechanism. It operates to preserve self-esteem as well as to reduce anxiety and guilt.

3. *Paranoid construction.* Meissner calls this a

"cognitive elaboration which serves the specific function of providing a meaningful context within which the projective system of the individual can be sustained and reinforced." It is a "meaningful frame of reference," one that "often takes the delusional form of the conviction of a conspiracy among a group of individuals." The paranoid construction is manifested in more benign form in "belief systems and value systems of various kinds, including political ideologies, religious belief systems, and social and cultural values."

The paranoid construction, as Meissner conceptualizes it, provides a matrix within which individuals can find some sense of purpose and belonging that gives meaning to their existence. It serves the function of stabilizing and lending this matrix of significance to their projections, which in turn serve to maintain the integrity of the person's sense of self.

To sum up the paranoid process, it is clear that projection enables people to remove from their sense of self the aspects of their psychic makeup that are unacceptable, repulsive, or too painful to tolerate. These elements include hostile, destructive, and omnipotent impulses and wishes, which paranoid people unconsciously externalize and attribute to other individuals or forces. According to Meissner, the paranoid individual "organizes his sense of self around the victim introject so that the projective elements serve the important function of supporting his adherence to that vulnerable position. If, at the same time, the paranoid construction allows the patient to fit his perception or persecutory agents into a much larger scheme in which they become the instruments of a far-flung Communist conspiracy to drive him crazy, damage his reputation, or kill him, then the projections take on meaning and can be sustained. The entire composition can be brought to the service of sustaining the individual's sense of himself as a persecuted and helpless victim."

INABILITY TO TRUST

Some behavioral scientists, taking their lead from psychoanalyst Erik Erikson, relate the origin of a paranoid personality to a developmental problem. They view the person's exaggerated employment of the mechanism of projection as evidence of deprivation that has occurred in early life, resulting in a lack of basic trust. In a developing personality a fundamental and abiding confidence in others is normally generated in infancy if caring parents adequately and consistently respond to all the child's needs and distresses, such as hunger, thirst, or fear. By achieving an ability to trust others, albeit passively, individuals become psychologically capable of believing promises made to them and of expecting that people in the ordinary surrounding environment will generally act in a benign way toward them or at least will not inflict malicious

harm on them. In trusting others, they can relax at times and not have to remain always on guard. They can allow people close by to move around them without surveillance; they need not fear that what escapes them may be placing their well-being in jeopardy. But when this basic trust is not developed, the personality that results is characterized by suspiciousness, guardedness, independence, a tendency toward social isolation, and the other paranoid traits noted earlier.

SITUATIONS FOSTERING PARANOIA

In *Personality Development and Psychopathology*, psychiatrist Norman Cameron has written that seven types of situations favor the development of paranoid disorders. These include (1) an increased expectation of recurring sadistic (cruel, humiliating) treatment, (2) situations that increase distrust and suspicion, (3) social isolation, (4) situations that increase envy and jealousy, (5) situations that lower self-esteem, (6) situations that cause a person to see his or her own defects in others, and (7) situations that increase the potential for rumination over the probable meanings and motivations of others.

Commenting on Cameron's observations, psychiatrists J. Ingram Walker and H. Keith Brodie, in *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry*, 3rd ed., state: "When frustration from any combination of these conditions exceeds the limits that the paranoid personality can tolerate, the patient becomes withdrawn and anxious; he realizes that something is wrong but cannot explain it. The patient begins by attributing malicious intent to trivial and unrelated actions of real persons in his environment; next the patient sees these people as organized into a community of plotters . . . Cameron called this organization the *pseudocommunity* with which the paranoiac binds together projected fears and wishes to justify his own hostile aggression and gives it a tangible target." In the United States it is not uncommon for paranoid individuals to identify their pseudocommunity as Communists, the Mafia, or the C.I.A.

WHAT HELPERS CAN DO

In response to the question in the letter that occasioned this article ("And how can I help him?") and in the light of the foregoing discussion of why paranoid persons think and act the way they do, I would like to offer an array of recommended ways of coping with these individuals. These suggestions are based in part on psychiatrists George Vaillant and Christopher Perry's experience in studying and providing therapy for paranoid disorders.

1. Strive to cement a solid alliance but not an affectionate one. Establish if possible a stance of collaboration and sharing, not of control or insistence.

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2. Don't argue with the person or defend yourself and what you do. Even minor mistakes, faults, or inconsistencies on your part as a religious superior or other helping person should be frankly acknowledged.

3. Always be sincere and scrupulously honest.

4. Remember that a heated confrontation guarantees a lasting enemy and an early termination of the conversation. However, you need not express agreement with the person's injustice-collecting; instead, just ask if he or she can agree to disagree.

5. Neither dispute the person's complaints nor reinforce them.

6. Never enter into argument about the individual's delusions or suspicions. Acknowledge that you can imagine the world that the paranoiac describes.

7. Help paranoid persons to feel that they have some control over what is happening at work, in their community, etc.

8. Don't give them contradictory verbal and non-verbal messages.

9. Suggest change as an implied possibility, never as a demand.

10. Don't offer psychological insights into the nature or origin of their problems, since these observations are often heard as accusations or an attempt to deprive the person of something.

11. Keep in mind that when it becomes necessary to confront the behavior of paranoid persons, they are generally able to hear much more from their peers than from people they perceive as their superiors.

12. Whenever you set limits on the behavior of a paranoid person, you can expect your action to trigger anxiety and depression. You must be willing to listen to and tolerate these affects when they appear.

13. Use inquiry rather than give advice regarding actions they intend; help them think through the probable consequences.

14. Remember that trust and intimacy are troubled areas for these persons. Don't be overly warm.

15. At times a paranoid person's behavior becomes so threatening that it is important to control or set limits on it. But never threaten to take control unless you are willing and able to do so. It is profoundly frightening for paranoid individuals to feel that those trying to help them are weak and helpless.

16. When paranoid persons manifest delusional thinking, they should be told that you know they believe what they are saying is true but that you do not see evidence for what they are contending. Do not debate. Treat them gently, without humiliating them.

17. If possible, don't surprise them. Let them know ahead of time any contemplated changes that are likely to affect their lives.

18. Never prod them to talk about themselves or their ideas.

19. Maintain strict confidentiality about any personal disclosures they make to you.

20. Don't tease or kid people whom you recognize as paranoid.

21. Never speak or act in ways that give you the appearance of being allied with or against them.

22. When paranoid individuals whose delusions are of persecution or who are fiercely jealous seek comfort in solitude, do not discourage this tactic.

23. Some paranoiacs are able to channel their aggression into an acceptable social or political movement or into a form of unpleasant work that features belligerent aggression. Encourage such a strategem.

24. When delusional ideas begin to develop, it sometimes helps to gently encourage paranoid persons to disengage themselves from the circumstances or the persons involved.

25. If paranoid persons become psychotic (i.e., seriously impeded in their capacity to handle reality) and their delusions are of persecution or if intense jealousy prevails, be aware that they are nearly always a danger to themselves or to others. They should be referred to a psychiatrist as expeditiously as possible. It is the physician's task to evaluate the advisability of hospitalization or the use of drugs as treatment. These topics are better left unmentioned until the doctor's decision has been made.

26. Remember that in their deepest hearts, all paranoid people are searching, albeit ambivalently, for the one person in the world they can really trust.

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SIGNS CAN BE NORMAL OR ORGANIC

Obviously, not all of these recommendations can be applied in the case described in the letter, but many of them can. In general, it is important to try to appreciate the needs, anxieties, and inner tensions felt by paranoid persons and to be ready to listen attentively, patiently, and empathetically to their experiences and feelings. Doing so will allow them to feel understood, accepted, and valued, not avoided, judged, or rejected. It is worth keeping in

mind, too, that people who are beginning to exhibit paranoid behavior may be manifesting signs of an organic rather than a psychological illness. They may be on the brink of suffering a stroke; they may be having a toxic reaction to alcohol, amphetamines, or even marijuana.

You can expect to find at least a few paranoid traits in ordinary, normal people at every stage of adult life, in both sexes and in sociocultural contexts of every kind. The symptoms may be transient, intermittent, or lifelong. Paranoid thinking is only sometimes an ingredient of mental or physical illness. If you suspect that it is so in the life of someone you care about, get in touch with a psychiatrist and describe the person carefully. Be guided by the doctor's advice. (We plan to include an article in a future issue of *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT* that will discuss in depth the most effective ways to refer a person who needs psychiatric care to a professional who can provide it.) Regarding the psychiatric treatment of paranoid people who are mentally ill, it is good to remember that such treatment is considered by professionals to be, as Meissner has observed, "as problematic, if not more problematic, than the treatment of any given diagnostic category."

Understanding paranoid people and their problems can greatly facilitate efforts to be helpful on their behalf as well as prevent serious mishandling and waste of precious time and energy. On rare occasions it might even save your life.

RECOMMENDED READING

- Meissner, W. W. *The Paranoid Process*. New York: Jason Aronson, 1978.
- Shapiro, D. *Neurotic Styles*. New York: Basic Books, 1965.
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BECOMING HOLY & WHOLE

NOREEN CANNON, C.S.J., Ph.D.

The problem of becoming both holy and whole is a universal one. As human beings, we all experience a longing for self-fulfillment and a yearning for self-transcendence. It is the tension created by these seemingly contradictory needs that constitutes the problem of holiness and wholeness. For religious this problem is often felt more intensely because of the nature of our religious commitment and life-style. As a Catholic nun-psychologist, I find it necessary to take up this problem in an effort to find a way to deal with it in my own life.

Father Josef Goldbrunner, a psychologist, philosopher, and theologian, defines the problem of holiness as a paradoxical struggle between being "wholly wordly and wholly devoted to God . . . of living a holy and Christlike life while affirming all the energies of one's human nature." He states further, in his book *Holiness is Wholeness*, that the attitude a person takes toward this struggle (which I would call a person's spirituality) is of major importance because the way in which religious and psychological needs are treated affects the vitality of our lives. When we accept human nature with all its conflicting desires and paradoxes (perhaps this is what it means to "take up one's cross"), the soul seems to thrive and to develop in a unique, creative way. If, however, we ignore or reject a part of ourselves (often in the name of holiness), the soul suffers and rebels in some form of psychological or physical spiritual illness.

What does all this mean for us who have been

taught that we must deny ourselves to be saved? Does not the command "Be ye perfect" mean that certain feelings, desires, and needs must be sacrificed? And what about Jesus' challenge that we are to hate our own life? The professional religious person can easily feel forced into a choice between holiness and wholeness.

PSYCHOLOGISTS APPROACH RELIGION

There was a time not too long ago when a choice of holiness was taken as a matter of fact. Many of the Church's saints and mystics experienced a physical or mental breakdown that was perceived to be associated with holiness. However, there is a growing awareness among theologians today of the intrinsic relationship between religious maturity (holiness) and psychological and physical integration (wholeness). Psychologists, non-Christian as well as Christian, have stressed the close connection between psychic suffering and the failure to achieve authentic religious values. Psychiatrist Carl Jung, one of the first to suggest the value of both religion and psychology in the pastoral care of souls, viewed psychological wholeness as a religious problem. In an address he gave to a confer-

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ence of clergymen, Jung stated that "psychoneurosis must be understood, ultimately, as the suffering of a soul which has not discovered its meaning." Adolph Guggenbuhl-Craig, one of Jung's disciples, suggests that the concepts of individuation and salvation are closely related. In fact, he sees the salvation of the soul as the goal of the individuation process. Psychologist Barry McLaughlin has pointed out the relationship between psychological consciousness and growth in holiness.

Goldbrunner, who has profoundly explored the topic of holiness and wholeness, applies the principles of Jung's psychology to Christian spiritual development. In *Cure of Mind and Cure of Soul*, he says that

the psychological steps which lead to the discovery of the self also assist the actuating of the person. And since this is a precondition of the Christian relationship to God which is called faith, it is not surprising that individuation can be regarded as a criterion for the realization of the faith. This means that the life of faith is dependent on the general level of maturity which the person has reached. Any help that is given towards the maturing of the personality will also have a fruitful influence on the development of faith. Religious education will have to turn its attention increasingly to these connections between the development of personal maturity and the development of faith.

Abraham Maslow and his "third force" movement in psychology has also addressed the problem of holiness and wholeness, although in secular terms. This branch of psychology has directed its attention to the transcendent side of human nature, warning, as psychologist Kevin Culligen, O.C.D., has stated, that "the neglect of this aspect of our existence is as psychologically dangerous as the denial of the biological, sexual, social, intellectual and interpersonal sides of human life."

These insights from the behavioral sciences lend support to the well-known spiritual maxim "grace builds on nature." Spiritual directors have gradually realized that growth in the spiritual life is intrinsically related to psychological maturity and that the pursuit of holiness can be destructive when it ignores the natural laws of human growth and development. There is also a growing awareness among professional religious that a number of our traditions, particularly our spiritualities, have been psychologically detrimental and have fostered false attitudes about holiness.

FEAR OF BEING HUMAN

We have outgrown our traditional spiritualities. I say this for two reasons. First, our spiritualities have not kept pace with our progress in under-

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standing human nature and thus are no longer adequate for dealing with the problem of holiness in today's world. At the risk of oversimplifying the causes of the decline of institutionalized religion and the crisis of vocations in religious orders, I think it fair to say that Western spiritualities have failed to meet the needs of a large number of believers. Second, a Christian spirituality rooted in dualistic theology has alienated the soul from the body and fostered a highly intellectualized, repressive type of spiritual life. Contemporary theologian Matthew Fox, O.P., describes the type of spirituality I am referring to in *On Becoming a Musical Mystical Bear*:

Repression, not expression; guilt, not pleasure; heaven, not this life; sentimentality, not justice; mortification, not developing of talents; these are the earmarks of what Western spirituality has for the most part done with the thought of Plato and the neo-Platonists (who always preferred a different world to this one); of Augustine (who, in his neo-Platonism and in his accommodation to Manichaeism, dichotomized the body and soul, man and woman, creation and grace and founded Christian faith on belief in the Fall rather than in Creation); of Denis the Pseudo-Areopagite who saw all of life as a series of hierarchies and who envisioned the spiritual quest as a climbing up this vertical.

Most of us know, however, that we are not disembodied spirits. And a spirituality that fosters flight from the world or the flesh cannot be recon-

ciled with our understanding of incarnational theology. In contrast, the spirituality of Jesus, which was Hebraic rather than Greek, neither condemned material creation nor attempted to make us angels. Jesus preached freedom and detachment, love and compassion. But despite his attempts to introduce a new attitude, obedience to the Law won out. As William McNamara, O.C.D., has observed in *Mystical Passion*, "the Christian trend (illuminated love instead of Law) was not strong enough to break through the embedded rigidity of the Roman Empire."

In many ways, things have not changed. Our religious heritage has fostered a deep fear of human nature and its passions. As a result, we have rejected the body and lost touch with eros—the very source of love and spiritual life. And when love is suppressed, so is the capacity for holiness.

HOLINESS VIEWED AS PERFECTION

Traditionally, the religious person was taught to deal with the problem of holiness by suppressing psychological and physical needs while consciously striving to become perfect. In this context perfection is judged according to the ethics of the Stoics and others: one's chief concern should be to perfect oneself for the glory and enjoyment of attaining superiority.

As a novice in the religious life I was taught how to be holy. I learned that it was possible to achieve a state of spiritual perfection in which needs, desires, and passions would no longer disturb my soul. This state seemed very desirable to me, and I believed that it was God's will. For five years I was formally instructed in the ways of perfection, which meant attempting to model my life on the lives of the saints, those "imitators of Christ," while acknowledging my inability to do so. This constant failure kept me very humble.

In *Life and Holiness* the image of holiness that I pursued is accurately described by Thomas Merton as "an image without the slightest flaw."

The saint, if he ever sinned at all, eventually became impeccable after a perfect conversion. Impeccability not being quite enough, he is raised beyond the faintest possibility of feeling temptation. Of course, he is tempted, but temptation provides no difficulties. He always has the absolute and heroic answer. He flings himself into fire, ice water or briars rather than even face a remote occasion of sin. His intentions are always the noblest. His words are always the most edifying clichés, fitting the situation with a devastating obviousness that silences even the thought of dialogue. Indeed, the "perfect" in this fearsome sense are elevated above the necessity of or even the capacity for a fully human dialogue with their fellow men. They are without humor as they

are without wonder, without feeling and without interest in the common affairs of mankind. Yet of course they always rush to the scene with the precise act of virtue called for by every situation.

Becoming a saint seemed a very simple matter of aping the lives of the saints, of imitating their example of heroic virtue. It was a matter of will. When I failed, I blamed my lack of generosity, never realizing that my image of holiness might be distorted and misleading. Nor did I allow myself to be confused by the facts—that some of those same saints were clearly neurotic, difficult to live with, and very human. Motivated by a strong desire to be a nun and by a fear that I would be judged unworthy (many of my companions were being dismissed), I transformed myself—from a rebellious, undisciplined, self-willed adolescent to a docile, self-effacing caricature of what I thought I was supposed to be.

In the years that followed, I suffered interiorly from this constant effort to be better than human, and I mistook my suffering for holiness. Knowing how the saints had suffered from inner conflicts and from outer misunderstanding, I naively thought my pain was a sign of growing sanctity. The more I suffered, the holier I felt. Gradually my self-image became that of "nun," and I lost whatever sense of personal identity I had started with. Again, I misunderstood the deeper meaning of what was happening to me (that I was losing myself) and interpreted it all à la Thomas à Kempis's words in *The Imitation of Christ*:

The more violence you do to yourself, the greater will be your growth in grace . . . There is no other way to life and to true inner peace save the way of the holy cross, and of daily mortification. . . . Man must think of himself as he really is: nothing. Truly to know and despise oneself is the best and most perfect council.

In my work and association with professional religious, I have discovered that my own early experience in the spiritual life was not uncommon. Many religious, trained in a one-sided, dehumanizing spirituality, willingly sacrificed their unique individuality in the pursuit of holiness. Anxious to transform ourselves into Christlike persons, we tried to bypass the human condition, believing that the less human we were, the more holy we were.

BODY AS SPIRITUAL ENEMY

Despite a pro-body attitude based on both Old and New Testaments, traditional Christian spirituality has been more influenced by Platonic dualism than by Jesus or the Prophets before him. The

theology of the Middle Ages, dominated by an understanding of human nature that stressed a radical division between matter and spirit, viewed the soul as imprisoned in the body. This dualism led to an increasing asceticism in the medieval Church, which resulted in an attitude of indifference or hostility toward the body. The tension between the mind and body remained a constant theme in the lives of the saints and the writings of the Church Fathers. Spiritualization became the aim of all religious striving, and purity was the key to holiness. Sexuality was repressed and war was waged against the body. Asceticism took the form of constant vigilance over the body's impulses. To ensure that the instinctive drives of the body were controlled, it was common for those pursuing greater holiness to engage in strict bodily fasts, flagellations, and night vigils. Maltreatment of the body was thought to be good for the spirit, although there is evidence that St. Francis of Assisi and other saints learned to regret their own health-damaging behavior by the end of their lives.

Even though some of the symptoms of dualism, such as extremes in asceticism and bodily abuse, are no longer common, much of our thinking about holiness still reflects a deep-seated fear of the body and a denial of sexuality. My therapeutic work with

professional religious, as well as my own lifelong struggle with my body's needs, makes me think that abuse of the body is still prevalent but its forms are different. I suspect that problems such as obesity, alcohol and drug addiction, workaholism, depression, inability to be intimate, and some forms of physical illness are all symptoms of an unconscious self-destructive drive that has its roots in negative, rejecting attitudes toward the body.

Psychotherapist Bernard Bush, S.J., who works in an international therapeutic treatment center for professional religious, has also observed the negative effects of traditional spiritualities. In *Loneliness* he points out that

There is still among us a strong strain of moralism and idealistic perfectionism which compounds depressive guilt feelings and compulsive self-destructive behavior. We find that many of the neuroses we treat are aggravated by styles of spirituality and community life that encourage religious to be slavishly dependent, to intellectualize and mask so-called negative feelings, and to try to be happy without giving and receiving genuine affection and warm love.

HOLINESS	
TRADITIONAL IDEA	POST-VATICAN II
Spirit vs. body dualism Perfectionistic idealism Complete self-transcendence Suppressed desires and feelings Willed imitation of saints Denial of human needs Conformity to rules	More authentic personal identity Greater responsibility for life Religious and psychological wholeness Self-fulfillment pursued A process of development Becoming oneself Self-confrontation

God has given us an almost unbearable burden—freedom. And we continually attempt to escape it by finding someone who will take it from us. Perhaps this explains much of what has happened to professional religious persons. Motivated by an intense desire for union with God but uncertain about how to attain it, we surrendered the responsibility for the whole project to a collective. The fear of being human caused many of us to escape into a life of certainty, a life of unconscious obedience and compulsive good works. Holiness consisted of conformity to rules and regulations imposed from without. Our very image of sanctity freed us from the responsibility (and burden) of being fully human.

The Second Vatican Council challenged, perhaps unwittingly, the traditional image of holiness. It strongly encouraged religious groups to renew themselves. As we began the process, our eyes were opened to the fact that our structures were somewhat oppressive and that our rules prevented human growth toward holiness and wholeness.

Since Vatican II, many of those structures and rules have disappeared. Most religious institutes have experienced a loss of members as they have attempted to create new, more life-giving structures. More recently, the focus has shifted. As religious groups have come through the turmoil of change and have achieved a new sense of stability, the crisis has shifted to the individual who has suddenly been confronted with the need to develop a more authentic personal identity and to assume greater responsibility for his or her life. The need for psychological wholeness, long buried under false attitudes about holiness, has entered the conscious level. The focus has changed from how-to-be-holy to how-to-be-whole.

But our efforts in this direction have not brought the fulfillment many of us expected and desired. We find ourselves still wondering what went wrong. We tried to be holy and that did not satisfy us. We tried becoming more psychologically educated, and that too has failed.

When I began to explore this dilemma in myself, I realized that I still possessed the traditional image of holiness that I described earlier. And I discovered that the same was true for others who shared their struggles with me. Many of us are still unconsciously dualistic and perfectionistic. While previously our desire for perfect self-transcendence was the focus of all our conscious striving and the need for self-fulfillment was repressed, now it is just the opposite. And the problem remains.

At the root of our difficulty, I think, is an image of holiness that we thought we were rid of. Still, as is true of any rejected psychic image, this one is still alive and active in our unconscious and continues to make us feel that we must be perfect. Either perfectly holy or perfectly whole.

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Is there a way to overcome our either-or mentality and to transform this perfectionistic image so that we can achieve both religious and psychological wholeness? I propose that there is, and I want to suggest a type of spirituality, based on Jung's concept of the individuation process, that might promote integrated growth in both holiness and wholeness.

TOWARD AN INTEGRATED SPIRITUALITY

It seems important to redefine holiness as a process of development rather than as an end product. Or, as Fox defines it, "a decision, a choice, a movement, a living symbol, a process of becoming alive." It means finding what Jung called the self, what the Church Fathers called the heart, what St. Paul called the inner man, what some call the center, or true self, and what Jesus called the child. It is a search for the Divine within. This process of becoming one's self is frequently likened to a journey. It is experienced by many as a "going deeper" in order to discover and explore one's inner world.

Having redefined what we mean by holiness, we can see that Jung views individuation as an expression of this same process, but he describes it in terms of psychological rather than religious concepts. Many of his insights are helpful in understanding the intrinsic relationship between holiness and wholeness and in illuminating the difficulties that the religiously committed person often faces in dealing with this problem.

Inherent in Jung's individuation process is the need to identify the sources of our identity and self-esteem. For the professional religious person,

this frequently means differentiating what one does from who one is (ego-persona differentiation). It also requires coming to terms with the "shadow," or the dark forces in one's personality (unconscious). Such self-confrontation is a necessary part of spiritual as well as psychological growth. Referring to the fact that religious persons have been notorious for their lack of consciousness, spiritual writer William Johnston, S.J., states in *The Still Point*:

Most of us live in illusion about ourselves and other people. We project upon ourselves and others the archetypes from our collective unconscious. And to escape from ignorance and illusion we must discover the real self hidden below the stream of hate, fear, aggression, anger, lust, arrogance, and so on, passing across the mind.

Traditionally, religious life has strongly supported such illusions and self-ignorance. Coming to terms with our shadow is particularly painful for the professional religious who has identified with the perfect image of holiness and has suppressed negative feelings and individuality.

Writing in *Review for Religious* (1979) on Jungian psychology and Christian spirituality, Robert Doran, S.J., raises another major problem that the professional religious must come to terms with, that of self versus group needs:

The problem of ego-persona differentiation can be very acute in religious life, and in fact wherever community living is pursued as a desirable goal. True community is based on shared meanings and values. But in religious life it involves also living and working together for the same apostolic ends. The complexities of common life and of corporate apostolic work are such that the temptation is ever present to identify too exclusively with one's job or function or with the opinion held of oneself by others. . . . There is a fine line to be drawn between the self-alienation that can develop from such identification and the kind of self-assertion or individualism that is clearly contrary to the union of hearts and minds to which one commits oneself by religious vows. Only . . . discernment . . . can resolve such difficulties.

Doran points up what to me is a central problem in religious life today: how to live in accord with the dictates of our individual natures (or freely discover those natures) and at the same time maintain our relationship to a valued collective. Is it possible for an individual to live a holy and whole (individuated) life within a religious community? Doran would say yes, suggesting that discernment of spirits can resolve individual/group issues. I think

**Either perfectly holy
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he is correct in the sense that discernment is a process that respects the individuality of the person *and* the needs of the collective. The problem is that discernment is not possible unless the discerning parties are truly individuated. As a process of decision making, discernment flows from our ways of being and can only take place when we are open to the possibility of God speaking through all the experiences of our lives, including our inner world of feelings, fantasies, and images.

But herein lies the problem. Most religious have been trained to repress their inner experiences. Reason and blind obedience have dictated what we have allowed ourselves to feel. Our spirituality has fostered false thinking about creation, about God, and about sin.

We are gradually becoming aware of the need to replace such attitudes with new ones that are more consistent with our growth in human consciousness. Our belief in an incarnate God, who is continually creating, "making all things new," urges us to search for a new type of spirituality, one that puts a primary value on an openness to experience, and discern God's call in all the existential events of our lives. Even dreams are relevant in this type of spirituality. The precedents for their use in discerning God's call can be found in Scripture, particularly in the lives of the Prophets.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY NEEDED

I believe we need a spirituality that is deeply Christian and deeply psychological. Such a spirituality would be radical because it would go beyond the old law of obedience to an outer authority and

would recognize the inner authority of the individual as the higher moral principle.

Such a spirituality would bring the body back into the spiritual life, honoring the role of eros and sexuality in sensitizing us to ourselves and others. No longer could we, in the name of holiness, separate our feelings, desires, and emotions from our conscious discernment and communication. Such an acceptance of our body would make us not only more human but also more vulnerable and compassionate.

In contrast with the old life of certainty, this new life would bring insecurities. It would require that we give up the pursuit of certainty to pursue self-understanding and insight. John Dunne, in *The Way of All Flesh*, refers to this quest as the way of "trial and error" or "finding one's own balance." His insights are pertinent to the type of spirituality I am describing:

One must find [one's] own mean between the extremes. Only one who has [personally] tried the extremes can find this personal mean. . . . On the other hand, trying the extremes will not necessarily lead to finding the mean. Only the [person] who perceives the short-comings of the extremes will find it.

The path of individuation is quite different from the traditional way of suppressing our nature in obedience to the Law. Often such obedience has protected us from facing powerful emotions and painful feelings that play an important role in our development. In the passage above, Dunne is referring to the need for personal involvement and experience to arrive at an individual morality. Because of insufficient experience and self-knowledge, many professional religious have not internalized authentic religious values. For them, the process of

individuation may require the breaking of tradition or religious rules so that the wisdom contained in these abstract laws may be concretely and personally experienced and integrated. In any case, the individuation process will involve the painful and holy task of transforming and assimilating into conscious personality those darker forces that have been buried in the unconscious. This is the process we have traditionally called conversion of heart.

In the life of Jesus, the path of individuation was a "way of the cross." And so it is for us. Our way of the cross, if we choose it (or if it chooses us), lies in the abandonment of security and perfectionism and in the embracing of a spirituality that plunges us more deeply into the quest for holiness and wholeness. As John Sanford has written in *Healing and Wholeness*:

Becoming whole does not mean being perfect, but being completed. It does not necessarily mean happiness, but growth. It is often painful, but never boring. It is not getting out of life what we think we want, but it is the development and purification of the soul.

Wholeness is, in this sense, holiness.

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A REFLECTION ON GUILT

DOMINIC MARUCA, S.J., S.T.D.

Feeling guilty or ashamed is an experience most of us have known. Whether in childhood or adolescence, in the full tide of adulthood, or in our declining years, we have all been troubled by the awareness that we have fallen short of ideal behavior. Whether brought on by pure accident, curious fantasy, vehement passion, or willful disobedience, whether broadcast to many or known only to ourselves, there has stirred within us a vague sinking feeling of having failed to meet expectations, either our own or others'. Confusion and embarrassment accompany our realization that dictates of our conscience or demands of society have been transgressed.

Such a primordial experience seems to have been common throughout recorded history. Today many people are feeling it in aggravated form. As we survey the face of our earth and are confronted by millions suffering hunger and starvation, displaced from home and country, oppressed by violence and fear, we feel uneasy. We are troubled as we rest in comfort and security, dine at a sumptuous table, feel the warmth of a glowing fireplace. As we read of mind-boggling nuclear arsenals being assembled to preserve our pleasures and safeguard our prerogatives, we sense a dreadful feeling of wrongness,

be it ever so remotely connected or loosely interwoven with our positive actions or passive compliance.

Yes, for most of us, sinful folly, wasted opportunities, tarnished ideals, and betrayal of a cause or friends are not things we have to take on faith, on the word of sacred Scripture, or on a holy tradition. These are realities crying out to us from our own depths and bursting from the seams, straining to hold our world together.

DEMANDS INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

The literature describing or attempting to analyze the common experience of guilt is extensive. Sensitive spirits have left us memorials of anguished recollections of youthful folly or shameful betrayal of family, friends, or cultural and religious heritage. Augustine's *Confessions* and Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis* come readily to mind. Gifted artists such as Dostoevsky, Kafka, Melville,

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and Camus have created characters and dramatic situations to awaken us to the tangled web of human evil, irresponsibility, injustice, and guilt. Disciplined observers, following Freud and Jung, continue to fashion hypotheses and formulate theories to account for the origin and evolution of a morbid disease that so diminishes human vitality.

It is Martin Buber, however, who calls us to stand with him in dreadful awe before the depths of this fathomless mystery. Real guilt, he insists, is fundamentally different from all the "anxiety-induced bugbears that are generated in the cavern of the unconscious." Personal guilt does not permit itself to be reduced to trespassing against a powerful taboo; it is not moral masochism compounded by the sadism of a tyrannical superego. Buber rejects any form of reductionism that thinks it has dealt with the significance of behavior when it has succeeded to its own satisfaction in describing what are attendant psychological processes. Rather, we must recognize that the source of guilt, both personal and corporate, lies in the irreversibility of the torrent of time that is sweeping us along relentlessly. What we have done or failed to do is fixed forever. For Buber, humans are capable not only of becoming guilty but of illuminating that guilt. Yet we must bear in mind that the complex phenomenon of guilt lies beyond the grasp of any one method. It calls for an interdisciplinary approach.

The following observations and reflections are offered as a modest contribution to this corporate investigation. My viewpoint is not that of a scientist making inferences from data gathered by observation and experiment but of a spiritual director privileged to have been entrusted with the life stories of many.

A DIRECTOR'S OBSERVATION

At some point in spiritual direction we must engage in the process of appropriating our past. There is usually little difficulty in acknowledging what has been gift and achievement, what is the subject of heartfelt gratitude and legitimate satisfaction. It is the facing up to those areas of the remembered landscape that are overcast with shadows that is most frequently resisted. I have been struck time and again by the contrasting ways in which persons confront this experience. (For the sake of simplicity, allow me to present a composite profile without appropriate shadings.) Frequently, the events they described and the decisions they reported sounded almost identical. In other words, the elements that constituted their respective life histories they shared in common, but the ways they came to terms with or sorted out those elements moved in clearly different directions.

Some seemed enveloped by darkness and depression as they fixed their gaze on the past. Tormented by remorse and regret, they felt deep anguish. If

occasionally they succeeded in shifting their eyes to the future, they became filled with anxiety. Like the figures of the damned depicted by Michelangelo in his Sistine Chapel painting of the Last Judgment, they turned in on themselves, as if in a futile effort to deny or diminish the impact of the dreadful reality being revealed to them.

On the contrary, others reflected on their past and became uplifted and apparently bathed in light. They were filled with a sense of compunction and repentance, which also gave them an assurance of reconciliation and confidence as they looked to the future. Like the figures surrounding the Savior in Michelangelo's painting, they turned away from themselves, toward another, with awe and wonder on their faces.

REFLECTION ON A DIFFERENCE

"Why this striking difference?" I often asked myself. The answer seemed to be found in the distinctive refrain that punctuated the telling of their stories. I heard some saying, with almost a staccato rhythm: "How could I have been so wicked? So weak? So stupid? So unfaithful? So ungrateful? So blind to the needs of others?" while others shook their heads in wonderment, saying: "How can he be so merciful? So patient? So understanding? So faithful? So gracious?"

What is obvious from this composite description is the difference in focus. On the one hand, there is a morbid preoccupation with oneself. The point of convergence for every detail recalled is the individual's own failure or deficiency. The debilitating sense of guilt seems to emanate from an egocentric fixation. Shackled, as it were, to this pole a person can only be lacerated by monotonous self-indictments and self-condemnations.

On the other hand, we have a liberating concentration on Another. The sense of guilt is still present, at times even more intensely, but the point of referral is away from oneself. It is theocentric. The invigorating sense of compunction gives rise to variegated forms of praise and thanksgiving.

This is not "cheap grace"; it is not an irresponsible flight from the bewildering complexity of our social obligations. Rather, it is a realistic acceptance of the fact that all our relationships—to ourselves, to those persons whose lives are interwoven with our own, to the manifold world entrusted to us—are somehow linked with one central relationship: to God, the source of all life and the sovereign Lord of history.

Each of us is blessed and burdened by the memory of our past. Whether that memory weighs us down body and soul or enables us to soar upward depends on how we re-member, how we piece together, the different parts of that past. As things we have done or failed to do, places, persons, images, feelings, thoughts, and desires flit across the screen of memory, we have a choice: we can try to evade

The memory of things past is indeed a worm that grows and will not die

them. But, as Martin Buber has pointed out, the price paid for the annihilation of the sting of guilt is the final annihilation of the chance to become the beings we are destined to become. We can descend into the murky recesses of our psyche and attempt to label each tributary flowing into the stream of guilt. However, while this pattern can certainly help many who are troubled to sort out unwarranted feelings of guilt and distinguish them from genuine guilt arising from actual evil committed, this process can be unending. As psychoanalyst Gregory Zilboorg has observed, "There are endless gradations between the unconscious, irrational sense of guilt and the fully conscious."

Lawyers, psychotherapists, philosophers, and theologians must engage in the effort to gain a more accurate understanding of the breadth and depth of responsibility, personal and corporate. The origin, evolution, and resolution of this special form of anxiety that we call guilt must be explored, for it is indeed a tension signaling that life principles are being violated, conditions of human social existence transgressed, and spiritual realities ignored or affronted. I offer these pastoral observations not as a substitution for this exploration but as a complement.

The memory of things past is indeed a worm that does not die. Whether it continues to grow by gnawing away at our hearts or is metamorphosed into a brightly colored winged creature depends (as John Noonan concluded in reviewing Bernard Nathanson's book, *Aborting America*) on whether we can find a forgiveness we cannot bestow on ourselves.

When Shakespeare had Macbeth ask

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseas'd;
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow;
Raze out the written troubles of the brain;
And with some sweet oblivious antidote
Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart?

the doctor knew that the disease in question was beyond the reach of his practice. The best he could prescribe for Macbeth was the reminder that: "Therein the patient must minister to himself."

Some may find forgiveness in the private sanctuary of their solitude; others will seek it through the assistance of a confessor. But all of us must ultimately kneel or stand with broken hearts and empty hands before the One who alone can make it so that, in the words of Julian of Norwich, "all shall be well and all manner of things shall be well."

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(signed) Anthony P. Battiatto, Vice President

THE HEART'S *Fling*

JAMES TORRENS, S.J.

Frowning, she is at the mirror
to pluck a gray lash, stretches
the skin over a crow's foot, wonders,
probing her breasts, what their use.
Is she beyond the age of love?

A handbell jingles in the next room,
jingles again. "Coming!" She lets out
a long sigh, slips a robe on.
Spoon feed, B.M., sponge bath,
some touching up: mother's slow start.

Father merely hovers. Sulky days.
Then a late-news face catches at her,
carrot hair combed flat, eyebrows arched.
Like who? George What's-it, Hirsch, dorm rowdy,
repair whiz, killed in a head-on.

She determines swiftly: George,
showboat, shrewd friend, be forty,
live! For him she tries car maintenance,
pages *The Joy of Sex*, lets play her wit.
Her eyes dream. She cooks to please.

Her parents note, waiting an outcome.
At Safeway today, as she rounds an aisle,
that hair and strut! "Georgel!" A head wheels.
"Ernie." She reddens, groceries spill.
He laughs, they gather things. "Will I do?"

The terminology of Christian life used to abound in phrases like self-sacrifice, to say nothing of self-denial, concepts that one is now apologetic about raising. Gone, like the Lenten fast.

Root out self-will, we used to be told. Ignatius of Loyola insisted with his followers that holiness lies in mortification, the readiness to leave off what you are stubbornly and determinedly bent on doing or what you are bending someone else to allow you to do. Certain preachers and spiritual writers gave this notion of mortification a bronco-breaking slant and contributed unwittingly to its decline.

Do not be self-centered, we were told as children. Beware of the ego, the inflated sense of your own worth, the sucking, black hole force that draws everything into its vortex. That was before Piaget and other students of child development reminded us that there is a quite normal egocentric stage. And Freud has made ego respectable beyond almost anything else in his system. Not that Piaget and Freud are gospel; if we have learned anything it is that psychology does not supplant religious wisdom. But the ground is now less sure, and we are called to correct some crude ways of conceiving things.

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Within recent memory, religious vows were praised as a total renunciation, a death to the self. Many of us some years back cried "caricature" at the funereal scene in *The Nun's Story* in which Gabrielle lies face down for her last vows before a looming cross and coffin. How embarrassing to find later that this scene was not far from the practice of some European orders of nuns. The point of the movie was very modern: the self will out of the coffin, as if we needed a movie for a reminder.

Caricature comes easy and can be exercised in reverse on our own times with its theme song "I want to be Me" and its absorption in the subject boldly advertised by the new magazine appearing in supermarkets, *Self*. The message bearers of today emphasize the care and feeding of the self as of some exotic plant. "Pamper yourself. Do you secretly desire something? Do it! Be it!" Old World families, for example, those who still stream into San Francisco from Hong Kong or the Philippines, hard working and goal oriented, find their adolescents breathing this air, and what a blow-up can occur between generations!

Yet the spirit of the times and the serious thinkers of the world always contain some seed of the true, which tries to break through the crust of the half-true and the false that keep forming massively around it. Huge numbers of people today suffer from a diminished sense of self. The "mega-world" pressing in on them seems to squeeze out the sense of being a valuable person. They are undeclared in college, undecided in their political party and religion, with a square of themselves uncommitted in human relations. The ideal of St. Joseph, happy to be unknown, *amans nesciri*, strikes terror, the menace of nonbeing, into those still searching for identity.

We need to remind ourselves that St. Catherine of Siena in the fourteenth century; while praying to Christ to take away the last traces of her own will, had no lack of ego strength and no hesitancy in writing to a vacillating pope, "Be a man!" When we hear her say, "As soon as people begin to love themselves with sensual self-love they begin to fear," we have to recall that she herself received the incomparable mystical gift of an exchange of hearts with Our Lord. St. Catherine of Siena was her own woman in a way that would be incomprehensible to the trimmers and followers whom Dante put in his first Inferno, judging them not bad enough even to get into hell and saying of them, "I did not know death had undone so many." Abraham Maslow has found a descriptive category parallel to Dante's, that of the well-adjusted but merely pragmatic copter. For all the cleverness of self-preservation, Maslow says, it is not always a great thing to merely cope.

So many factors today attenuate our sense of being real: long years of abstract study, the worm of self-consciousness (in Prufrock's or in Dostoevsky's sense), the flagellations we endure from

an anxious conscience, the sense of being anonymous in a crowd, our helplessness in the face of weapons. How to be somebody? What somebody to be? We fear declaring the death of the self before it has come to life or exercising hatred on a self we have not yet come to appreciate or love. What then are we to make of that paradoxical language Jesus keeps addressing to us, to which we are driven back continually as to a nucleus of spiritual health and the very pith of the call of discipleship, a summary of the world's religious wisdom?

If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. He who is anxious to preserve his life will lose it; she who gives up her life for me will find it. What does it profit someone to gain all the world, but lose his soul? Or what exchange can one make for the soul? (Matthew 16:24-27)

These words, this message, we are told, came powerfully from the lips of Dorothy Day, whose attachment to the Lord was never in question. In translating I cannot bring myself to abandon, as translators now tend to do, the word soul, which signifies not so much a disembodied principle as the concentration of inner life. Those of us who as parents or teachers graduate our young into that roiled forum, the world, still shudder at the possibility of those dear to us selling their soul, quietly letting go an ideal, compromising to get ahead, not marrying for love, taking a bribe, neglecting a major talent, closing their eyes to some shame.

The call to discipleship issued by Jesus to the rich young man found his generosity wanting. The dis-

ciples and Jesus, too, admitted the human impossibility of taking up this call. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, knowing the terrible burden imposed by the conditions of life in Nazi Germany to be far beyond the inherent powers of any rich young man to shoulder, had a glimmering of what true selflessness might be:

To deny oneself is to be aware only of Christ and no more of self, to see only him who goes before and no more the road which is too hard for us. Once more, all that self-denial can say is, "He leads the way, keep close to Him."

So the secret is a great love, a fling of the heart. St. Augustine was voicing not so much a stern ascetic command as a Utopian dream when he pictured the city of God being built by the love of God growing into the contempt of self. Contempt of self and contempt of the world are troubling phrases that continually tend to go sour unless sweetened with the awareness of love (God's, he who "so loved the world") and of lovable-ness (ours, because "he loved me and delivered himself for me").

The Song of Songs achieves just that by celebrating the impulse to self-forgetfulness in intense young love. Jews and Christians have generally read it as a simile of God drawing his people tenderly and passionately and eliciting the response of the soul, i.e., of the whole person responding from deep inside. This interpretation rings true enough, because "love is of God" and tutors us in him, provided, however, that the primary sense of the *Songs*, "the witness to love between the sexes," is not lost. (See Roland E. Murphy's essay, "A Biblical Model of Human Intimacy: *The Song of Songs*, in *The Family in Crisis or Transition*, edited by A. Greeley.)

In a remarkable prayer-poem the Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral pleads for her young lover, who, much troubled, had committed suicide in the course of their romance. She goes beyond the grave, as it were, to argue on his behalf with God (the translation by Langston Hughes):

You say he was cruel? You forget I loved him
ever.
He knew my wounded flesh was his to shatter.
Now the waters of my gladness he disturbs
forever?
I loved him! You know I loved him—so that does
not matter.
To love (as You well understand) is a bitter task.

A recent Japanese novelette, *The Hunting Gun*, by Yasushi Inoue, recounts the following episode. In a girls' school, they are studying the active and passive voice of English. A girl passes a paper around asking, "Which do you prefer, 'to love' or 'to be loved'?" All, including Saito, the story's central figure, check "to be loved," except for the last person, a "gloomy girl," who boldly circles the opposite. What Saito comes to realize at the end of her

fling, her long adulterous affair, is that despite its exalting moments and the great burden of happiness she bore (as Inoue puts it), she has failed her true husband and missed her calling to love.

Sexual love, or more accurately romance, or more comprehensively, love stronger than death, can be quite ambivalent, yet it can afford us our prime human experience of self-forgetfulness. The lover is by no means unaware of pleasure, exaltation, and a sense of well-being. But the other is his or her focus. The lover is ready to go to any lengths, sacrifice all comforts and even future hopes, just as St. Paul did when he cried out his love for his fellow Jews: "I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen by race."

In our discourses on agape we need to remember the sturdy roots it has to have in eros, like the choice vines brought over from Europe and grafted in the New World into and made to grow out of the wild root. In Jesus alone is the native human energy without its admixture of the wild.

More and more these days I meet women who once belonged to religious orders and in whom still, whether married or single, the pull of the ideal, the spirit of devotion, and even a certain unworldliness are quite evident. One does not conclude that their spirit of self-sacrifice has faltered. Risking simplification but noting their still strong desire for God, I conclude that they failed to find in religious life the environment for a great love. The same is true for many former priests and brothers.

Religious life itself has not ceased, any more than family life has in an era of misfortune, to be a prime context for exercising this love. If we keep remembering the four women who were murdered in El Salvador in 1980, it is with awe and gratitude for the great love they enacted. And the figure of Celia Coplestone of *The Cocktail Party*, by T. S. Eliot, choosing the dangerous service of the gospel as a greater context for her love than that of an unsatisfactory affair, still appeals strongly.

But those who give themselves to the consuming love of "Christ the tiger" (Eliot again) and wish to be touched by fire (purified but set aflame) need much strengthening and support. Father Peter Cantwell's fine essay, "Ongoing Growth Through Intimacy," in the Fall 1981 issue of *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT*, suggests how much support to lend and what kind.

To conclude, what we live by and are made by is still the type of action that made Gerard Manley Hopkins marvel—a Franciscan nun crying out in welcome to Christ among distraught passengers in the face of a shipwreck. He called it "the fling of the heart." Everything that can help us live thus is precious.

Saul Bellow's Parable on Suffering

JAMES G. POWERS, S.J., PH.D.

The psychological insight and spiritual wisdom behind Christ's categorical statement, "He who brings himself to nought for me discovers who he is" (Mt. 10:39), enjoys credibility on both humanistic and Christian levels.

The creative value derived from maturely experienced suffering is so evident that its meaning can be lost precisely because of its obviousness. Ludwig Wittgenstein is certainly correct when he warns, in *Philosophical Investigation*, "The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something—because it is always before one's eyes) . . . we fail to be struck by what, once seen, is most striking and powerful."

Fortunately, literature lies at our disposal and summons us to appreciate the significance of psychological, not to mention theological, wisdom. Much of this wisdom might otherwise be elusive, if not lost altogether. Nowadays especially, with our healthy emphasis on holistic learning, we find that one discipline can legitimately illumine another; literature is no exception. The philosopher Russell Kirk, in *Enemies of the Permanent Things*, suggests that the mythical element in literature is intended to wake us from inattention to important human truths and values. This is reaffirmed by Northrop Frye, in *On Teaching Literature*, where he welcomes a broader tolerance of literature as more than a "licensed liar"; instead, he sees poetry and story as important vehicles to express "society's beliefs or visions of its situation and destiny." In other words, literary artists are not "just playing with words . . . and telling stories for fun." Rather, the imaginative writer seeks to elicit constructive acceptance, on a level that only fancy can shape, or truths too vital to treat any other way.

One such truth looks at suffering and our saving response to it. A concrete example of this comes to us through the imaginative pen of Saul Bellow in his short story, *Leaving the Yellow House*.

Bellow is sensitive to Christian and Jewish categories, even though he perceives their validity as weakened. According to literary critic Robert Detweiler, Bellow "writes a vocabulary of salvation suitable to modern understanding or at least modern imagination," just as St. Paul did for the first Gentile congregations. In a word, Bellow, while not

sharing a traditional Judeo-Christian outlook, by no means takes Mikhail Bakunin's view that man is a "perpetuation of one vast mistake." Instead, as Robert R. Dutton has stated in *Saul Bellow*, Bellow sees man as "subangelic" because he has the "power to overcome ignominy;" and, by suffering, to "rise above the indignities of complete subjection to unseen and unknown forces, to give him a stature not totally in the chains of a miserable naturalistic impotency." Bellow always stresses the importance of trying again; like Sisyphus, he is not ascending but is patiently and painfully making his "trip back to the bottom of the hill." It is this effort that gives meaning to what Bellow calls man's "suffering, feebleness, and servitude." We ignore this demanding philosophy of persistent struggle at our peril, because without it, deprivation (whether purely human, or for the Christian, divine) can scar our nature, leaving us orphaned and starved.

Bellow confronts us with a modern parable in *Leaving the Yellow House*, a story of Hattie, an old dying woman. Her margin of survival was always slim, persuading her to rely deceptively on everything and everyone except herself, whom she did not really know or love. However, near the end, Hattie discovers resources of independence and strength. These permit her not only to face death serenely—to "leave the yellow house"—but also, creatively and boldly, in her final testament to deed (leave) her one treasure, the house, to the only deserving beneficiary: herself. This brave step, on a mundane level foolish and illegal but strong in self-recognition and a sense of worth, powerfully commands our wonder and respect. It comes at a time when the heroine, deprived of all she relied on so heavily (friends, liquor, car, health), learns these are not that indispensable. Only one element counts: her ability to choose, to exert an act of the will without fear; this she does in her final will and testament. Hattie follows a classic Bellow formula, summarized by Marcus Klein in the *Kenyon Review* (Spring 1962): "Despite all circumstances of oppression, despite the violence of nature and violence of men, despite the cocky, as-

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sertive 'I,' despite all determinisms and despite finitude and death, the individual is free and free to choose."

How does Saul Bellow assemble and relate this tale of development through sacrifice? In what appears to be an excessively detailed opening, the author clutters Hattie's world with particulars, each of which she clings to with a frightening tenacity. At this stage, she believes that *survival* alone is the purpose of life. To lose any one object would be to lose everything; mindlessly, she pursues this hapless philosophy. No wonder, when she wrecks her Chevrolet, Hattie sees the accident as "a terrible end, a terrible judgment on her." Further, in trying to free the car, Hattie breaks her arm—another disaster. Her acquaintance, Darly, who was begrudgingly helping her, utters an ominous threat: "Christ, if you can't look after yourself anymore, you've got no business out here!" Stripped of what she always equated with "life," Hattie panics: "Oh God, what will I do?" What Hattie "will do," only after further suffering, will be to shift values dramatically, discovering the only possession worth developing is herself.

Bellow refuses to rush into Hattie's transformation. He first must establish her capacity for heroism. In the hospital, fighting to resume her aimless life, the protagonist reveals layers of resilience and a kind of nobility heretofore hidden. The tempo is suspiciously upbeat: "Well, old Shellback," coos one neighbor, "there's a little more life in you now!" What irony! The words will prove true, but not in the speaker's intended sense; the "life" of self-worth is about to be born, but only after all else is gone. Deceived that she is going to recover and pursue her old patterns, the narrator informs us: "Hattie was going to attend to lots of things . . . She rambled over to her house, examining things." One cannot miss Bellow's compound use of "things," foreshadowing a future "examination" of the person who is Hattie.

Decrepitude increases. Hattie grows desperate. "It's your house you ought to sell," a neighbor advised earlier. But Hattie's estimate of its worth is inflated; after all, she sees it as her only asset. It is equated with life: "Fifteen thousand was her bottom price." Naturally, no one was willing to meet her demand. To compound her suffering, her closest friends, the Rolfs, announce that they must leave to visit Seattle. Faced with isolation and diminishing fortune, Hattie uncharacteristically asserts: "Don't worry. I'll make out. But if I have to leave the lake you'll be ten times more lonely than before. Now I am going back to my home."

Ensnaring his heroine alone in what she now calls home (not the title's "house"), Bellow finally steers his story to its climax. This focuses on a crude offer by Pace (another neighbor of questionable character) to buy the yellow house at an outrageously cheap price. Hattie angrily rebuffs him: "Everybody wants to push me out! You're a cheat-

er, Pace." Her deep anger has given her fiber and, armed with the realization that she alone can determine her future on the strength of the value she puts on it, Hattie undergoes a transformation described thus: "So she stood up and, rising, she had the sensation that she had gradually become a container for herself." In other words, the heroine perceives two persons: the superficial Hattie who unquestionably led a life of misplaced values dictated from the outside; and a new Hattie, with a growing self-esteem. She observes: "I was never one single self anyway . . . Never my own. I was only loaned to myself." This insight, the best possession that Hattie ever owns, arises from sorrow, and the narrator emphasizes as much: "The notion that in this emptiness someone saw her was connected with the other notion that she was being filmed from birth to death. That this was done for everyone. And afterward you could view your life. A hereafter movie."

Now life's "secrets" vanish for Hattie: an overdue admission of who, among the men she had known, had been her true love; the long suppressed confession of "something on Hattie's film she had tried to shun," namely, that "it was she herself who had killed her dog." Fully aware now that a new, independent Hattie was in charge of the "house," the heroine asks: "Who would get the most out of this yellow house?" She catalogues all of her superficial friends and relatives, the frail anchors of her life; she mutters a quote from the psalm: "Have ye eyes and see not? Sleepers awake!" and then makes the only permissible choice: "I leave this property, this land, house, garden, and water rights, to Hattie Simmons Waggoner. Me! I realize that this is bad and wrong. Not possible. Yet, it is the only thing that I really wish to do, so may God have mercy on my soul." Hattie displays, as Brigitte Scheer-Schäzler observed of Bellow's earlier character Moses Herzog, "the lifting off of a heavy burden, a great pressure, that leaves the protagonist in a state of relief, not to say redemption."

Hattie is transformed by her painful experience; her creator, Saul Bellow, invites us to make her fulfillment our own. Theologian John J. Navone, S.J., in *Everyman's Odyssey*, quotes existentialist Rollo May: "'Myth is an expression of man's unique self-consciousness'; it reveals man's 'capacity to transcend the immediate concrete situation and see life in terms of 'the possible'.'" Navone continues: "[The artist] is interested in a skillful recreation of an experience within a certain horizon, so his audience may likewise experience it within the dramatic presentation of the myth. Through myth is depicted [the artist's] reaction to what is most important in his life; and what is depicted is less the exterior world than the inner life of the dramatist."

This parable, *Leaving the Yellow House*, "holds the mirror up to nature." It reveals a truth about suffering and makes it memorable by the alchemy of myth.

Book Review

The Book for Normal Neurotics, by Allan Fromme. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1981. 235 pp. \$10.95.

Dr. Allan Fromme, a clinical psychologist, therapist, and author, is a man convinced that "a mere knowledge of the unconscious, of ambivalence, of Oedipal problems—none of that in itself helps us. Only as we adapt this information to our own needs" can we become comfortable in our world. His ideas are presented to the reader in the format of a dialogue, an old literary form that goes back at least to Plato, but a form that is not commonly used today. Although Fromme does not indicate what was behind his choice, he possibly decided to use it as a device to keep the reader's interest at a peak. Whatever his reason, this reviewer feels that the format limps.

Fromme presumes that most of his readers as well as many of his own acquaintances are both normal and neurotic. Those who want to be more normal than neurotic must be shown how to improve the quality of their life experience, not the quality of their thought. It follows that a major aim of the book is to provide remedies rather than explanations, solutions rather than descriptions. In doing this, the book is reasonably successful.

The following is a sampler of the wide variety of

issues covered: being grown up, hating someone, having shortcomings, being afraid, being assertive, having nasty habits, using the body in psychological satisfaction, marriage, family life, and having a rich inner life. Although psychosocial development and the psychological sources of problems are mentioned, what Fromme really stresses is what one can do to improve one's experience of life. The idea is to keep one's attention focused on the consequences of behavior and to make this a habitual action so that one does not have to create the effort consciously each time to act in one's own best interests. One should also work on making himself or herself more interesting and acceptable to other people since none of us can live a happy and satisfied life in isolation.

This quite readable book provides a wealth of psychological information. Moreover, it contains a lot of developmental information, although the reader will not find it noted as such. Although the author is obviously conversant with psychoanalytic and dynamic concepts, he consistently downplays them and repeatedly emphasizes the importance of acting on problems, of becoming a doer by habit, and of changing feelings by first changing behavior.

—John T. Murray, S.J., M.D.

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Religious Facing Retirement

We recently received a very helpful letter from Sister Lovey A. Reyes, icm, who suggested several topics for articles in future issues of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT. One of the themes she encouraged us to focus on is how to help sisters prepare themselves for retirement. Sister Reyes observed that "quite a number become resentful when the time comes for them to be sent back to their home countries for retirement." These sisters "cling tenaciously to . . . the missions." Her question is: "How can we make these sisters look forward in hope and peace to this phase of their life?"

But sisters working in missions distant from their home countries are not the only religious who, if they live long enough, must face up to the reality, or at least the possibility, of retirement. Following Sister Reyes's recommendation, we are planning to write a full-length article on retirement as a problem for aging women and men religious. We would like to enlist your assistance in preparing this article. Many of you are involved in helping individuals (perhaps including yourself) to deal with the physical, social, cultural, economic, work, and other changes related to retirement.

Will you send us a summary of the steps you are taking that are proving to be helpful? And don't forget to tell us which ones are turning out to be unhelpful, too. We will share your suggestions with our other readers, who live and work in more than 100 countries all over the world.

The Editors

Grace Before and After Reading?

There is one American airline I especially like to fly. It's Continental. At mealtime the flight attendants place on every tray a small, folded, colorful card that says on the outside, "For those of all faiths who wish to join in a table grace." Inside is printed:

Prayers from the Psalms

BEFORE THE MEAL

O give thanks unto the Lord for He is good:
for His mercy endureth forever. For He
satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth
the hungry soul with goodness. (Psalm 107)

AFTER THE MEAL

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is
within me, bless His Holy Name. Bless the
Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. (Psalm 103)

I recently found myself wondering whether there are people who say grace before and after the nourishment that comes through reading. My own preference would be:

BEFORE READING

I mean to sing to Yahweh all my life,
I mean to play for my God as long as I live.
May these reflections of mine give Him pleasure,
as much as Yahweh gives me! (Psalm 104)

AFTER READING

It is good to give thanks unto the Lord
And to sing to Your name, O Most High;
To declare in the morning Your loving kindness,
And Your faithfulness in the night,
With the ten-stringed harp and with the lute,
With resounding music on the zither.
For You have made me glad with Your deeds;
Of the work of Your hands let me sing. (Psalm 92)

But I wonder what graces for before and after reading our readers would want to recommend. Please tell us; we would like to know.

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